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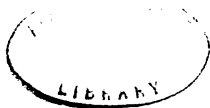
REV. MARK O'BYRNE.

Thundher an' Turf

BY
REV. MARK O'BYRNE

New York
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THE PRIEST S BOY

I

THE most respected and most influential man in Carnemore parish, barring Father Corish himself, was Tom McGrath, the priest's boy. He had filled that responsible and dignified position in his own traditional, old-fashioned way, for surely twenty long years. Curates had come and gone, but Tom McGrath remained, unchanged and unchangeable; apparently growing neither younger nor older; always dressed in the same fashion, a diminished clerical coat and a large-size felt hat, ever smoking the same familiar pipe with the gooseberry-bush shank and the meer-schaum head; busy at all times, but never in a hurry; seldom without secret information on parochial matters; watchful and jealous of the rights and privileges attached to his office; the greatest living authority on the ancient manners and customs of Carnemore.

Tom McGrath might easily pass for forty-five, but, at very least, he was ten years older. He was of medium size, a tidy, compact, type of man. His short, neatly-trimmed side-whiskers set off the clean-shaved, weather-beaten face, and gave him a spruce, comfortable look. Owing, doubtless, to his long and intimate relations with the clergy, he had developed a decidedly priestly appearance, and repeatedly had been mistaken for the curate or parish priest. Indeed, when seated side by side with Father Martin Corish in the pony's trap, it was almost impossible to say which was which.

Carnemore was never reckoned a "good parish," except by the native population. They pointed with pride to their curate's house, and challenged the county for its equal. It was a plain, substantial, serviceable, two-storyed residence showing four windows of almost equal size on its white-washed front. The hall-door was sheltered from the bitter east winds by a wooden portico of rather artistic design. Looking south across half a mile of rich but dreary, untenanted fields, the curate of Carnemore had a commanding view of

the sea, he could almost signal the great Atlantic liners as they glided round the Point. Across the road was the little chapel, a very humble, unimposing piece of architecture, its sides strengthened by two unsightly buttresses to support the low, spreading roof. Two crosses, one of stone and the other of wood, stood on either end. The interior was in pleasing contrast to the exterior. A handsome canopy, upheld by four fluted pillars, and chastely decorated in white and gold, overshadowed the high altar. The walls were coloured a warm brownish tint, with just a modest ornamentation round the rudely-arched windows. The tiled floor was cleanly swept. The seats were of various styles and various ages, but well arranged and in good repair. Fourteen large faded woodcuts, in heavy plain oak frames, marked the Way of the Cross. A tiny sanctuary lamp suspended from the crossbeam, banished all sense of loneliness, and filled the place with life and love. Poor, but homely and peaceful, Carnemore chapel inspired devotion.

It was Father Martin's second year in Carnemore. Thanks to Tom McGrath, his faithful, but somewhat officious and self-willed servant, he now knew every road and lane in the parish, and, what was of much more importance, thoroughly understood the ways and humours of the people. Describing their new priest to the few privileged neighbours who lived on Carnemore Cross, Tom McGrath assured them that he was a "knowledgeable" man, who, if he got one look at your face, could tell what sort of "fongs" were in your brogues; that he had never much to say, but would listen attentively to everybody's story, whether he believed it or not; that you never need tell him the same thing twice; that he knew little or next to nothing about farming, and would scarcely make much on cattle the way he was going on; that he was too particular about trifles and over-anxious to improve the place; that he set more value on shrubs and rockeries and fal-dals of that sort than he did on a drill of potatoes; that he was soft-hearted to a fault, and easily deceived by smooth-tongued individuals like Pat Stafford the Thatcher and others.

The neighbours drew their own conclusion from what the priest's boy told them. It was pretty evident that Tom McGrath was not having everything his own way, as he had

in Father Fleming's day. Some said it was high time to keep him in his place, and prevent him from ruling the whole parish as he had done for years. It was the same Tom McGrath that caused all the trouble between the League and Father Fleming the day of the big meeting by refusing to let the band boys play in front of the hall door. Who was it brought stories about the Mummers' Ball over in the Widow Connolly's and had it stopped, just as everything was ready? Who had prevented the youngsters from playing handball at the gable-end of the priest's coach-house, as had been the custom time out of mind? All knew who was responsible, but no one could dare say a word to the priest's boy. Many a lad on Carnemore Cross was glad, therefore, to think that the sceptre had passed from the hands of Tom McGrath, and that his word was no longer law.

Others regretted to learn that Tom McGrath and Father Martin were not pulling well together. Tom McGrath, with all his faults, was an honest man, and a born priest's boy. If the young people did not like him, so much the better. A more popular man might have too many strollers and friends about the priest's house, and that would be a great deal worse. It was unreasonable of Father Martin to expect a man of Tom's years to be as natty as another about flowers and plants. He was not brought up to it. As well ask him to wait at table. But he was invaluable in many other ways. He could tell the priest the history of every family in the parish; who was well off and who was only struggling; who to ask for a grain of oats or a handful of hay when things were scarce; who to consult, and who to keep at arm's length; how priests managed in the past, and how they failed—in a word, it was hard to see how Father Martin could get on, or how the parish could be run, if he ever parted with Tom McGrath.

Father Corish had no idea that the people took such a deep interest in the relations between himself and his boy. So far, apparently, their relations had been friendly. No doubt he had occasion sometimes to find fault with Tom's slovenly, slipshod style of doing things; but he little thought that Tom was taking correction with such bad grace. For instance, he objected to Tom's plan of cleaning the trap at the village pump with a wisp of straw, and allowing it to

dry at leisure in the sunshine. He suggested the use of a soft mop and a dry cloth, and a piece of chamois for the silver mountings. Tom grumbled not a little, and remarked that he had washed Father Fleming's car the old way, year in, year out, and it was never a bit the worse. Nevertheless, he did as he was directed, ever after. But Father Martin noticed that the trap was no longer brought to the Cross, lest the neighbours might sneer at this new-fangled method of working.

II

The unfortunate incident which led to an outbreak of hostilities was the trimming of the hawthorn hedge fencing the garden from the public road. The training of that hedge was Tom McGrath's master-work. Instead of clipping it level from end to end, as he might have done for his own convenience, he had twined branches here and there into all sorts of fantastic designs. Two immense dome-shaped ornaments crowned the extremities. And, standing equidistant along the thorny parapet, were a number of national and religious emblems such as a cross, a harp, a round-tower—to mention only a few. "The Priest's Hedge" was, in fact, one of the most curious and wonderful sights in Carnemore, and visitors to the district were invariably brought to see it. Whether they were all in admiration of Tom McGrath's artistic skill is another question. Father Martin, at any rate, never cared for a hedge decked out in this manner. In his opinion it looked cheap, cockney, and grotesque. He wished in his heart for some excuse to remove it altogether.

Accordingly, the morning Tom brought word that the "boys" had visited the garden the previous night and made love to the sweetest apples in it, Father Martin could scarcely conceal his delight. What matter about the fruit if he could find a true bill against the hedge! Both went out to the garden and soon discovered the very spot where the young thieves had got through the thorns.

"It's not for all they take, but the damage they do," said Tom, trying to repair the breach. "I wouldn't wish for the world to see anybody hurtin' that hedge, for there's not the like of it in Ireland, they say."

"It is getting rather thin and scraggy at the butt," remarked Father Martin casually.

"I don't mind that a bit," Tom replied, taking up at once the case for the defence. "You can see the light through every hedge comin' on the fall of the year."

"Very true indeed!" said Father Martin, with a smile. "But it is bad to see boys coming through a hedge, either in the fall or the rise of the year."

"That's right enough, your reverence; that's all right," repeated Tom several times, as he searched for some new line of defence.

"What would you suggest, therefore, is best to be done?" urged Father Corish.

"Nothing can be done, if it's thinkin' of keepin' chaps out of a garden you are," Tom answered most emphatically.

"But surely, Tom, we must defend ourselves as best we can against those young rascals. If we cannot keep them out altogether, we must make their raids as difficult as possible for them."

"And what do you intend to do?" Tom inquired in a rather dubious tone.

"I have been often thinking of cutting down this hedge to within three or four feet of the ground, and in a short time it would be a first-class fence."

"You don't mean the whole way round about?"

"Decidedly," replied Father Martin, "nothing less would be of any use."

"And what about the ornaments? The people will never forgive you if you touch them, for 'twas poor Father Fleming, God rest him! that showed me how to make the harp and crosses."

"I would be sorry to displease the parishioners, Tom, but necessity has no law, and charity begins at home."

"Of course, you know what's best, I suppose. If you'd take my advice, though, you'd give up growin' apples altogether, and then there'd be no bother keepin' out the chaps. After all, the few apples you do have are not worth talkin' about. What's more, them trees'll have the garden spoilt after a little time."

"Apparently, you are not fond of fruit, Tom."

"I'd rather have a drill of champions or a ridge of cabbage

than all the apples in the garden of Paradise," exclaimed Tom, burying the spade deep down in the soil with a drive of his hob-nailed brogue.

"Pity you were not there when the serpent arrived," suggested Father Martin good-humouredly.

"I wouldn't have got into trouble for the sake of an apple anyway," said Tom, moving off to resume his work, in the hope that the question would be adjourned *sine die*.

In this, however, he was disappointed. Father Martin was determined to have the matter decided immediately. When the winter came on, Tom would have a thousand excuses for not undertaking such tedious and laborious work. Furthermore, there was danger that Tom would tell the neighbours, and stir up a mild form of agitation against the proposed alterations. A deputation of the leading parishioners might arrive at the presbytery some evening, accompanied by the Carnemore Fife and Drum Band. If things reached that stage, the destruction of this sacred fence would mean civil and religious war in the parish. The only safe course to follow, therefore, was to strike down the hedge with one decisive blow.

So, following Tom to the centre of the garden, where he was busily engaged earthing up a fine row of celery plants, Father Martin reopened the discussion with the remark: "If you require any help to remove the hedge, I am sure Pat Stafford will be only too glad to lend a hand. Begin at it this evening, if possible."

"I can't begin this evenin', and I doubt if I'll have time to-morrow," muttered Tom gruffly, without interrupting his work. "You may send for Paddy the Thatcher if you wish, but I don't want him about the place."

Father Martin made no reply, and returned to the house, not knowing whether to be vexed or amused with Tom McGrath. Evidently there was no love lost between the priest's boy and Pat Stafford, or Paddy the Thatcher, as he was commonly called. It was impossible to say what might happen if Paddy were brought on the scene. Tom might leave altogether, or the two might quarrel and bring disgrace on the curate.

Not without some misgiving, therefore, did Father Martin send word to Paddy the Thatcher, inviting him to come

next day, if not otherwise engaged, and help Tom McGrath to cut down the hedge. Paddy's little cabin was away at the top of Fairy lane, about an Irish mile from the Cross of Carnemore. He was a married man with a young, helpless family. Poor, but honest and industrious, he was ready to turn his hand to anything. A time was when he got plenty to do at his own trade. But thatching was almost a thing of the past. The erection of iron haysheds and out-offices by the farmers, and the increase of slate-roof cottages for the labourers left little work for him. Father Martin was in the habit of giving him an odd day's employment about the place. When the weather came stormy, Paddy looked forward to a day or two on the roof of the chapel; when the days grew warm and the village pump went dry he was requisitioned to yoke the ass and car and dray water from the stream that crossed the road leading to Dwyer's of the bog; when the potatoes were "to diggin'," as they say in the barony, Paddy Stafford did the picking; when the rick was made, the Thatcher finished it in such style that it was an object lesson for the farmers coming out from Mass on Sundays; and, as they often remarked, "One would think it a sin to disturb it," so comfortable did it look in its tight-fitting jacket of newly-threshed oaten straw.

Paddy was standing on Carnemore Cross the following morning and met Father Martin returning from the chapel. The priest assured him that Tom McGrath would point out what was to be done. He hoped to find them hard at work on his return from a funeral office in Ballybeg. Paddy strolled around the place until Tom McGrath was done his breakfast. Apparently a priest's boy had his own time at his meals, for it was a good hour or more before Tom appeared.

"Will you be soon ready to start at the hedge?" asked Paddy, in a rather reverential tone of voice, for he noticed that Tom McGrath seemed to be in particularly bad humour.

Tom pursed his lips and threw a withering glance at the Thatcher. "I have something else to do," said he indignantly, and walked on.

"If you will give me a lend of a short ladder and a slasher I can be workin' away."

"I don't know where they are," was the curt reply.

"That's mighty quare, and yourself usin' them the other day in the chapel yard beyond."

"It's no business of yours when or where I was usin' them last."

"I didn't mean no offence," Paddy answered. "Sure, I'll have a look round for them myself. They can't have disappeared out an' out."

"You can plaze yourself that way," said Tom, sarcastically.

Paddy groped and looked everywhere, but neither tale nor tidings of the ladder and slasher could he get anywhere. He decided to use whatever implements came first to hand. There was a ladder leading from the stable to the hayloft. It would do for the present. The bill-hook which he found in the haggard would serve in good stead of a slasher. So he took them both, and proceeded to work under difficulties. The ladder was much too long. The bill-hook was hopelessly blunt. But Paddy was determined to conquer. In a marvellously short space of time he had tumbled the hawthorn turret that stood near the entrance gate. If not interfered with, he would have almost half the hedge down before Father Martin came home.

But Tom McGrath soon appeared on the scene in a terrible rage, a hay-fork in his hand, and the large felt hat thrown back on his head in fighting fashion. The audacious impudence of the Thatcher to take away the stable ladder without his permission was "beyond the beyonds." Never had the authority of the priest's boy been so completely ignored. It was certainly provoking to have the Thatcher called in over his head. But for an outsider, acting on his own responsibility, to enter the stable and cut off the only means of communication with the hayloft was little short of an outrage.

"Get down off that ladder at wance!" he yelled. The Thatcher, realising his helpless position, grasped the bough of a sycamore and clung on for grim death.

"For mercy's sake, Tom," he cried, "don't upset me. I'll do anything for pace and quietness."

"How dare you take this ladder? or do you think you own the place?" demanded Tom excitedly.

"Let me down first, before you ask any more questions!"

"If I did right I'd leave you there hangin'," said Tom. But he did not. The Thatcher climbed down cautiously,

and withdrawing twice the length of a pike-handle, assumed a more defiant attitude.

"You're a mighty contrairy man, Tom McGrath," he remarked, "to be goin' between me and the priest."

"No, but you're no better than a bailiff, comin' here against the people's wishes and behind the people's back to do damage and rise mischief in the parish."

"I'm not aware of doin' the like," Paddy protested.

"It's not but you're old enough to know the differ."

"As sure as you're born, Tom McGrath, I'm as innocent as a child in this matter."

"If that be so, I may's well tell you the whole affair, before you get into any more trouble," Tom answered, lowering his voice to a confidential tone.

He then proceeded to explain that the destruction of this hedge, for which the people had so much admiration, would undoubtedly cause great indignation in the parish, and that for the priest's own sake it would be safe not to encourage such vandalism.

Paddy listened in amazement. The possibility of such a situation arising had never occurred to him. Even now he did not consider it possible. Tom McGrath, for some reason or other, was unduly alarmed. The people, no doubt, had an old *gradh* for the hedge planted by poor Father Fleming. But what about it? If Father Martin thought well of cutting it down, why should he or Tom McGrath or anybody else interfere? Who would pay the priest if, for the want of a better fence, his garden were raided some fine night? Most likely it was Tom himself and a few cronies about the Cross that were making all the bother.

"That may be all very true," said he when Tom had concluded, "but it's not for you or me to advise Father Martin, much less disobey him."

"Then you mean to continue this disgraceful business?" demanded Tom, pointing to the gap already made in the hedge.

"I don't see why I shouldn't, provided the priest is satisfied, and I can earn an honest penny by it," Paddy replied.

"That's enough about it, so," muttered Tom, very much taken aback. And putting the ladder on his shoulder he

marched away in the direction of the stable. The Thatcher threw on his coat and went in search of his dinner.

III

Father Martin returned soon afterwards. Tom McGrath was waiting as usual to take charge of the mare and trap. But it was quite evident that he was out with himself and the world. So the priest merely passed a casual remark about the bad condition of the roads and stepped inside the hall door. He had some strange presentment that Tom and the Thatcher had been quarrelling in his absence, and he decided to observe absolute neutrality, or, in other words, to let them fight it out between them. They did so.

Paddy Stafford was well aware of the strained relations between the lads at the Cross and the priest's boy. If they knew that Tom McGrath was opposed to the cutting of the hedge they would willingly lend a hand to demolish it. Of course Paddy did not invite their co-operation. He merely described the situation to them as they sat talking on the lazy wall, waiting to be summoned back to the fields after dinner hour. Great indignation was expressed at the conduct of the priest's boy; and Paddy was assured that all hands would assemble after six o'clock that evening and make short work of the hedge.

Tom McGrath, on the other hand, was busy organising the opposition. There was no time to be lost if he hoped to save even a portion of the hedge. He relied chiefly on the influence and persuasive powers of a few leading inhabitants, including Mr. M'Carthy, the local schoolmaster, Mary Doyle, the post-mistress, and Ellen, the priest's own housekeeper. An informal meeting was held in the kitchen off the post-office when the boys on the Cross had dispersed. Tom related the history of the hedge from its plantation down to that fateful day when Father Martin, deaf to reason and regardless of public opinion, ordered its destruction. Mary Doyle corroborated every word the priest's boy said, and added that strangers coming in and out to the post-office had often asked her if she sold postcards with a picture of the nice hedge round the priest's house. Ellen, the housekeeper, assured her friends that the removal of the hedge

might result in her departure from Carnemore, as it would be intolerable to have people on the road staring in every time she appeared in the garden. Mr. M'Carthy listened attentively to the previous speakers, and when asked his views on the question replied that the proposed alterations would inevitably lead to more frequent raids on the priest's garden. The scholars going home from school would have a complete view of the forbidden fruit—gooseberries and strawberries, as well as apples. The cutting of the hedge was nothing short of leading them into temptation. He was really astonished at Father Corish doing such a thing. Tom McGrath was very pleased to inform them that there was no likelihood of the work being resumed until Monday owing to his strategy in seizing the ladder; that consequently they would be quite safe in postponing the matter to the following day, when a more representative meeting could be arranged after second Mass, and an influential deputation appointed to wait on the priest. This suggestion was unanimously adopted, and the conference concluded.

A sick call had come in Tom's absence. On entering the stable he found Father Martin himself putting the harness on the mare.

"Leave that to me, your reverence," he exclaimed, taking the hames from the priest's hands. "I was only over as far as the post-office, but Mary Doyle started talking and I couldn't get away."

"Many things I leave to you are left undone these times," replied Father Martin, sharply.

Tom knew too well what was meant. Very probably the Thatcher had brought stories to the priest.

The little mare wondered why Tom handled things so roughly and kept grumbling to himself as he yoked up for the journey, but, just to show that she was no party to the dispute, she trotted on in the best of spirits all the way to Ballycushlane. Ellen was ringing the Angelus bell as they passed by the chapel. She only caught a glimpse of Father Martin's silk hat gliding swiftly above the graveyard wall. Before she reached the road they had disappeared in the distance. It was unfortunate that Tom had to go away, for she noticed an unusually large group of boys on the Cross. They were up for some mischief.

Scarcely had she closed the kitchen door when she was startled by a confusion of voices and a strange crashing noise to the rear of the house. She rushed upstairs, and, protruding her head through the window overlooking the garden, beheld Paddy Stafford and a party of ten able-bodied men and boys in their shirt-sleeves making a simultaneous attack on different points of the priest's hedge.

"Stop that! stop that!" she screamed wildly.

But her voice was drowned by the slashing of bill-hooks and crackling of branches. Without waiting to put on any head-gear, she retreated hurriedly across the haggard to the post-office. The Widow Doyle consoled her as best she could, but candidly admitted that it would not suit her business to interfere with Paddy Stafford and the boys about the Cross. They were all good customers.

"You promised," said Ellen, "to oppose this work to the bitter end."

"I did," replied Mrs. Doyle, "in a general sort of way; but a woman that's livin' by the public can't afford to go again' the people."

"Is that the way after all, and you professin' such friendship for Tom McGrath?" Ellen commented, shaking her head contemptuously.

"I can befriend Tom McGrath in more ways than one," the widow remarked in a rather mysterious tone. "Who knows," she added, "but this whole affair may be all for the best."

Ellen was completely outwitted and disgusted. "Good evenin' Mrs. Doyle!" said she; "we'll know one another better in future"; and she strutted out of the post-office, her head strikingly erect.

It was long after dark before the priest arrived back from Ballycushlane. Paddy Stafford and his gang had completed their work, and dispersed. Ellen sat lonely and dejected at the kitchen fire, turning over in her mind how she would break the news to poor Tom McGrath. She had done her part and was prepared to do more had not Mary Doyle shown the white feather when the crisis came. In future Tom would not be so fond of running over to the post-office and gossiping. She would tell him every word the widow said and the cool way she acted.

"So we have been bested, I see, Ellen," said Tom despondently, as he threw the car rugs on the table, and bolted the door after him.

"Yes!" Ellen answered most decisively; "bested because the people you thought friends were afraid to open their lips fearing they'd lose a ha'penny on your account."

"Why then, now!" exclaimed Tom, careful not to compromise himself, until he had heard the whole story.

The story lost nothing in the telling. Ellen narrated her trying experience most graphically, contrasting throughout, in most artful fashion, her own intrepidity with the Widow Doyle's contemptible cautiousness. She was surprised and disappointed, however, to find Tom so reticent. He let her talk on, without saying yes, aye, or no, all the time.

"Wasn't that a nice way for your friend, Mrs. Doyle to act;" Ellen demanded in conclusion, determined to evoke an expression of opinion from Tom.

"I suppose she thought there was no use in interferin'," he replied calmly.

"She thought more about her pocket than about you and me—that's what she thought," protested Ellen, unable to control her temper any longer.

"Be aisy now, Ellen. It's not worth our while quarrelling for the short time we'll be together."

"What's puttin' that notion in your head?" she asked in amazement. "The priest won't think one bit the worse of you for tryin' to prevent the cuttin' of the hedge. And if he don't, you'd be a great fool to leave your snug berth; for you'd travel farther and fare worse, as they say."

"I needn't travel farther than across the road, and fare a whole lot better. I don't know what kept me here so long."

"Sure, if that be the case, you're only in the right of it to better yourself. But I have me doubts. If you get higher wages, you'll have heavier work too."

"I'll have scarce anything to do, instead of that, and more money than I can spend," he declared in a most confident tone, evidently having got a guarantee to that effect.

"Well, more o' that to you," said the bewildered housekeeper, convinced nevertheless that Tom McGrath's mind was beginning to wander.

"Time'll tell, whether me words are true," he added.

"Yes, Tom. Time is a great tell-tale," said Ellen as she raked out the fire. The clock in the hall had struck twelve.

The next day was Sunday. And that day three weeks Tom McGrath's words were fulfilled to the very letter. The little chapel of Carnemore was packed to the door, and Father Martin had turned round on the altar to read the notices, and say a few words. There was an unmistakable broad smile on his countenance, so wont to be severe, and apparently he found it difficult to keep serious. Then bracing himself, and raising the book so as partly to conceal his face, he read aloud, but somewhat indistinctly :—

"Be it known to all here present that Thomas McGrath and Mary Josephine Doyle, both of Carnemore, intend to be united in the holy state of matrimony ; wherefore ——"

The remainder of the proclamation was completely lost. There was an unseemly titter throughout the church, and several down about the door laughed outright. Father Martin scowled at his congregation, and severely reprimanded them for their want of reverence. The publication of the banns, he said, should not occasion such disedifying conduct. The persons, whose names he had called out, were two of the most respectable and devout individuals in the parish of Carnemore, and the pity was that many others did not follow their example.

Notwithstanding all he said, very few could regain devotion during the rest of the Mass. The moment the priest returned to the sacristy the entire congregation rose to leave, and considerable chatting went on, as they crushed out through the narrow porch. All were discussing the same topic ; and no matter where you turned you heard young and old taking the name of Tom McGrath in vain. Not since nor before was there such good-humoured joking and boisterous laughter on the Cross of Carnemore.

Nothing was left untried to discover the date of Tom McGrath's wedding ; but Father Martin was resolved to have the ceremony absolutely private. Tom McGrath and the Widow Doyle were married before break of day one fine morning in the first week of October ; and not until they were half way on the road to Wexford did the news spread.

The next Saturday an advertisement for a priest's boy

appeared in the local paper, and almost by return of post, Father Martin received no fewer than sixteen applications. So eulogistic were the references enclosed that it was impossible to decide between the candidates. Ellen said they were too good to be true. And Paddy Stafford, who acted as *locum tenens*, advised the priest to have nothing to do with strangers, but to train in some lad from the parish. Father Martin rather favoured this idea, little suspecting, however, that he was playing into the hands of the Thatcher.

"I tell you what it is, your reverence," said Paddy, "you could not do better than give my own son, Ned, a trial."

"Don't ask me, Paddy," replied Father Martin regretfully, "he is too young."

"He'll be turned fifteen next Shrove, and sure a boy should be fit for anything at that age. Besides, he's a good scholar, and got confirmed before his time, as I needn't tell you; for didn't the Bishop ask him his name out forinst all the people?"

"Quite true, Paddy! Ned is a good, intelligent lad. But what can he know about driving a horse or growing vegetables?"

"For his age, he's a first-rate hand after a horse, and can turn up a sod as nate as myself. Did you notice the patch of cabbage and parsnips on your left hand side goin' up Fairy Lane? Well, 'twas Ned planted them, every wan o' them. Bedad, I didn't bring him to idleness, your reverence."

"I do not wish to insinuate anything of the kind, Paddy," said the priest. "But, in my opinion, it would be much better to give your son a trade of some sort, so that he may have a chance of going up the ladder in days to come."

"A trade! Goin' up the ladder! Lave that so, your reverence. His father had a trade and kept goin' up ladders all his life, and what the better was he?"

"You were particularly unfortunate in your trade," argued Father Martin. "There is no work for a thatcher nowadays."

"No, nor for nobody else, beggin' yer pardon for differin' wud you. It will be the same story wud all tradesmen after a start, for everything 'll be made by machinery."

"If so, Paddy, why not send your son to be a fitter or something of that sort?" suggested the priest, uncautiously.

"Is it to wan o' them foundries?" exclaimed the indignant father, stepping back a pace; "I'd rather see my child breakin' stones on the roadside, wud no roof above him but heaven, than send him into a den where he'd scarce see the light o' day in this world, and maybe lose the light o' heaven in the next. No, Father Martin; as bad as we are in the country, they're far worse in the big towns, be all account."

Father Martin was silenced, and would much prefer not to have begun the discussion. He appeared anxious to retire.

"Are you goin', your reverence?" Paddy inquired, respectfully.

"Yes, Paddy," was the reply; "you are too clever a lawyer for me."

"Does that mean I've won my case, and secured the job for Ned?" said Paddy, moving after the priest to the garden gate.

"Well, let it be so," Father Martin answered. "Bring Ned over with you in the morning, and we shall give him a month's trial."

Paddy Stafford went home that evening a happy man. And there was great rejoicing in Fairy Lane when the neighbours heard that Ned, the thatcher's son, was going to be the priest's boy.

THE PRIEST'S NEW BOY

I

DID the letters come, Ellen ? " inquired Father Corish, as he shook the snow from his heavy frieze on arriving back from saying third Mass in Doonard.

" I have them safe for you, a whole bundle of them, Father," said Ellen, snatching the great coat in her arms to hang it in the kitchen. " But take off them boots, first, and put your feet to the fire, for you must be perished comin' along that bleak sea-road this terrible morn."

" Yes, it blew a gale round by Carnemore Point," replied Father Martin. " The little mare got frightened, too, with the roar of the breakers, and I had to take the reins from Ned for the rest of the journey."

" I wouldn't doubt him," said Ellen indignantly. " It's not but he has courage enough to drive a coach-an'-four, the consated little parte-box. I told you he wouldn't match us at all. He's too soft entirely."

" It is older and wiser he will be getting, Ellen," said Father Martin.

" I'll say no more about him till you have your breakfast," answered the old housekeeper, and she hurried off.

Father Martin took his place by the blazing fire in the dining room, and had time to finish his office before breakfast arrived.

" Now, you must eat every bit of that," said Ellen, as she removed the shining dish-cover from a nicely toasted snipe, which had been carefully concealed during the week in order to have a surprise for Father Martin on Christmas morning.

" Someone has been poaching evidently," insinuated the priest, jokingly. " I fear you are receiving ill-gotten goods, Ellen."

" It's no such thing, your reverence. Ill-gotten, indeed ! Ned's father shot it by chance a Wednesday last, and he down about the bog after rabbits."

" And why didn't he bring it home with the rest ? " said

Father Martin, knowing quite well that Paddy Stafford could badly afford to make presents.

"Much use he'd have bringing that home to a housefull of children; besides, herself would scarce know how to go about cookin' it. He said it would just do your breakfast if I wouldn't think bad of taking it from him."

"I hope you thanked him for me, Ellen," said Father Martin.

"I told him you'd have it for your Christmas breakfast, and that was enough for him. Still it would be no harm to mention it yourself the next time you meet him. He'll be ten foot high to know you liked it."

"Very much, indeed," remarked Father Martin, helping himself to another slice. "I shall probably meet him to-morrow on my rounds. But you are forgetting the letters, Ellen."

She rushed back to the kitchen and returned with the letters in her great white apron.

"No great loss had you put some of these in the fire," he remarked, taking out a pile of printed circulars and coloured illustrations, sent by some enterprising English firm of cigar importers.

"Sure, I was wonderin' if they were all Christmas cards," said Ellen. "Don't they bate the deuce for spendin' money foolish? I do be kept goin' collectin' papers of that description about the room, and only I use them for lightin' the fires during the winter the house would be full of them."

"You may take these also, and put them with the rest," he replied; which was a hint for Ellen to retire, lest she might re-open the discussion of Ned's unsuitability as a priest's boy.

Ellen withdrew, reminding him as she closed the door: "If I have forgotten anything on the table, make sure and ring the bell."

On reaching the kitchen, young Ned Stafford sprang from behind the door, shouting: "My Christmas box on you, Ellen!"

"You must have it," she answered, good humouredly, "although Father Martin tells me you nearly let the mare run away somewhere about Carnemore Point."

"Not at all," said the lad, quite boldly. "If he had left

me the reins I could manage her all right. Catch me letting her run away."

"You have terrible conceit for a boy of your age—but I shouldn't start scoldin' you Christmas Day. Here, be amusin' yourself with these pictures while I'm boilin' the kettle," said Ellen, handing him the illustrated catalogue; little dreaming, however, the temptation she was putting in his way. Ned glanced eagerly through the contents while Ellen got ready the table, and produced a large currant cake specially made for Christmas.

"Now sit in at once, before the priest comes," said Ellen, pouring out the rich dark beverage, made extra strong by an additional spoonful from the priest's own tea canister, in honour of Christmas Day.

Ned Stafford dragged his chair to the table, in real boyish fashion, having first taken care, however, to stuff the illustrated cigar catalogue deep down in his breeches pocket.

"How long are you with us, now, Ned?" inquired Ellen, casually.

"I'll be a month to-morrow," he replied, looking up somewhat suspiciously into her face. "Why do you ask me that question?" he added.

"Oh, I thought you were longer," she answered, innocently.

"Then you believe I'm goin' to be kept on!" said he, wishing to find if she knew Father Martin's mind on the question.

"Well, I can't say that. But Father Martin remarked this mornin' that it's older and wiser you'll be gettin'. You can make what you like out of that," was the old lady's shrewd reply.

"Who was carryin' stories and findin' fault, I would like to know?" challenged Ned, a dark cloud passing over his innocent young face.

"You shouldn't lose your temper on a Christmas Day," said Ellen, good-naturedly. "It makes no matter what people say or think, if you be biddable and do what the priest tells you."

"And what about yourself?" he asked.

"If you stay with the priest till I do you a bad turn, or try to put you goin', there won't be a black hair in your head, poor fellow. Here, now, take the rest of that currant cake

with you in your pocket, and let us not part in bad friends this holy and blessed day ! ”

Ned thanked her, and turned away quickly, for a big round tear streamed down his healthy cheek. Then retiring to the stable-loft, he unfolded the cigar catalogue once more.

II

“ Can it be possible—a whole box of cigars for nothing ! ”

The lad had never smoked a cigar in his life, for the very good reason that he never had the money to buy one. But a cigar must be something delicious, otherwise rich gentlemen would not smoke them. Why didn't Father Martin accept this generous offer ? There it was, black on white, in large letters : “ Sample box free. Send no money. Fill up the acceptance form enclosed. This offer holds good for ten days only.” Nothing could be plainer than that. There was no necessity to read all the small print that followed. How benevolent people become at Christmas time ! he thought to himself. Why deny them the opportunity of bestowing favours ? If Father Martin didn't care for cigars, Ned would have them with a heart and a half. It would be no harm to send for them. What matter did it make who received the cigars, when they were given away for nothing ? ”

“ Are you there, Ned ? ” shouted Ellen from the back door.

“ Yes, yes,” answered Ned, climbing hurriedly down the ladder, and rushing to the kitchen.

“ I want you to mind the house while I run over to Benediction. Keep that turkey turned till I come back,” she said, pointing to the fine fat bird suspended from a cord before a roasting fire. When ‘ the chapel is over ’ you must run down to O'Dwyer's, of the Bog, with this letter to know if they could spare the priest a few fresh eggs.”

“ Very well,” he replied, “ everything will be safe in my hands.”

Ellen threw on her cloak and bonnet, and picked her steps through the melting snow on her way to the chapel.

All seemed to favour Ned's scheme. He was now alone in the house. Ellen had left the pen and ink on the table, and a supply of notepaper with the printed address, “ St.

Kevin's, Carnemore, Co. Wexford." There was no time to be lost. He closed the kitchen door and took his seat at the table ; but in such a position that he could give an occasional twirl to the turkey. In the attempt to write his first business letter several sheets of notepaper were spoiled, and consigned to the flames. The final proof read as follows :—

" Dear Sir,—You may send on the free sample box of cigars as soon as you can. Father Corish don't like cigars, but I am taking them instead. Wishing you a Happy Christmas.—Edward Stafford, Coachman."

He read the letter several times before sealing the envelope. Then having copied the address most accurately, he searched the dresser till he discovered the penny stamps concealed in a deep jug on the uppermost shelf, and, lest a single stamp might not bring a letter all the way to London, he decided to affix two, for the sake of security.

Ellen arrived back soon afterwards and found Ned close to the fire watching the turkey most attentively.

The following week Ned took good care to meet the postman every morning at the gate, and examined the letters before handing them to the housekeeper. Not for the world would he let Father Martin or Ellen see a parcel addressed to him from London. What a long, dreary week ! He almost wished he had never sent for that mysterious sample box. Already, perhaps, the police were on his track for seeking to procure goods on false pretences. The firm might have written to the priest about him. Ellen, too, had begun to notice how worried and uneasy he looked. And Father Martin had remarked that he was growing more forgetful every day. Still, he hoped on. One puff of a cigar would repay him for all.

III

" Well, well, don't be talkin' ! What is the world comin' to ? " muttered Dick Sinnott, the postman, as he tried to push open the priest's gate without loosing his grip of the box under his arm. " Wonders will never cease when the likes of young Neddy Stafford are gettin' parcels from London."

" God-morrow, Dick ! " shouted Ned, stepping out from behind the shrubs which lined the avenue on either side.

"Musha then bad manners to you, anyway," exclaimed the indignant postman, "if I'm not bothered carryin' this box under me arm from Doonard. Would you tell me when did you get the title of coachman?"

"I'm as much a coachman as you are a postman," answered Ned.

"Faith, it's little I ever thought I'd have to carry parcels to the Thatcher's son," retorted the other.

"You're paid be the Government for it," added Ned, sharply.

"Here, take it out of me sight, you young spalpeen!" Dick Sinnott exclaimed, raising the box in menacing fashion. "You often heard it said," he added, "put a beggar a-horseback and he'll ride to the devil."

"I suppose that's why you have to do all on shank's mare," said Ned, seizing the box, and rushing behind a clump of berberis just in time to escape punishment.

"It's a great shame for the priest to have such people about him, and I won't be slow to tell him so, too," threatened Dick, in a loud angry voice, hoping that Father Martin would hear him.

Ned let him have the last word, and concealing the box under his coat, retired to the haggard, where he enjoyed his first smoke of a real aristocratic London cigar, entitled "Ne Plus Ultra." After dinner he had another. That night, when all were long since fast asleep, Ned sat smoking on delightfully. And before the week was at an end the box was empty. If he had money he would certainly buy more. But he had not. He should wait and see. Possibly his London friends would soon send a sample of another brand.

So they did, and he had not long to wait for it.

"I have a letter here for you from London, Ned, addressed, 'Mr. Edward Stafford, Coachman, St. Kevin's, Carnemore, Co. Wexford,'" said Father Martin, as they drove across to Doonard on Little Christmas morning.

"Is that so, Father?" Ned replied, trying to appear calm, whereas he could scarcely speak with the shock. "I suppose," he stammered on, "it is some of them patent medicine things."

"I wish they would send you a cure for giddiness and forgetfulness, and I would willingly pay the cost," was Father Martin's caustic remark.

Ned blushed, as only a boy of fifteen can ; nevertheless he was not short of a ready reply, " Them diseases wear off in the course of time, as you know yourself, Father Martin," said he, with a roguish twinkle in his eye. And unbuttoning the cast-off clerical overcoat in which he was almost inextricably entangled, he hid away the London letter in an inside pocket. The mare unyoked, he tore open the envelope, and glanced through the contents :—

" Dear Sir,—We had the pleasure of forwarding you a sample box of our best Havana cigars on the 28th *ult.*, which we trust you found entirely satisfactory. The 'Ne Plus Ultra' brand is priced on our list at 35s. per 100, and if you favour us with an order for that amount, we shall ask you to accept, free of charge, the sample box already sent you. Otherwise you will please remit at your earliest possible convenience P.O. 5s., the cost of sample box supplied.

" Yours truly,

" S. Clevereux, Manager."

Father Martin had finished reading the Acts, and the stragglers had gathered into the little country chapel. Ned crept stealthily behind backs and knelt underneath the stairway leading to the gallery. The priest looked at him reproachfully as he passed round with the collection box.

Very few words were spoken on the journey home to Carnemore. Father Martin was indignant to see the priest's boy among the late-comers at the chapel door. Ned was in poor humour for talking. The road seemed longer than usual. The little mare, too, trotted on reluctantly.

IV

A few short hours and it was nightfall. Ned retired early to his room over the kitchen, and, kneeling by the bedside burst into tears. The window rattled at regular intervals, as if somebody were knocking for admittance. He heard the moan of the breakers on Carnemore Point, and the clatter of countless wild-geese away on the lonely slob-lands. He rose and, pushing back the curtain, looked out on the moonlit scene. Woolly cloudlets scudded swiftly before a sou'-west wind. There were just a few big rain-drops on the window-pane. A door slapped open with a loud bang. It might be

the coach-house. What matter! He was going, never to return. A little parcel containing all his worldly goods was ready, waiting on the stable loft. He turned the key noiselessly, and stepped on tip-toe down the narrow stairs. Ellen had locked the back door, but he knew well how to undo the bolt. How it did creak and rattle!

"Who is that?" exclaimed Father Martin, rushing from the sitting-room with an open book in his hand. He had fallen asleep in his chair, after the weary work of Sunday, as had often happened before.

"It's only me," said Ned, trembling.

"Where in the world are you going?" asked the priest in amazement, noticing that Ned was muffled up like one setting out on a long journey.

"I am only going to secure the coach-house door, for I heard it banging."

"You may go back to bed, and I shall look after it," said Father Martin, very pleased indeed at such a striking proof of Ned's courage and sense of duty.

Ned did as he was told. He should spend another night in Carnemore. Was it more than a coincidence? Was it a sign that he should stay? He fell asleep without solving the question.

Next day his mind was quite clear upon the matter. He would remain for some time longer. And if eventually he should go, he would act honourably and give the priest notice. So he settled down to his work again and thought no more of the letter from London.

A week exactly after receiving the first letter, a second and much more emphatic note arrived from the firm of cigar importers, warning Ned that unless he forwarded P.O. 5s. within ten days, the matter would be put into the hands of their solicitor. Father Martin got a card by the next post bringing the matter under his notice, and requesting him to intervene before legal proceedings be taken. He was utterly astounded, for he naturally suspected that Ned had procured the cigars by dishonest means. Nevertheless, rather than allow the priest's boy to figure in the local papers, he forwarded the sum named that very evening.

Meantime Ned had made up his mind to go. He would give the priest notice that night after the supper.

"Come in!" sang out Father Martin in response to the knock at his door. He frowned on seeing who entered.

"I came to tell you I must be leavin' in the mornin', Father," said Ned, in a faltering voice.

"What has happened?" asked Father Martin, sternly.

"I'm thinkin' of goin' to me friends in America," answered the lad. He had come prepared to be cross-examined.

"I wish you had gone there long ago. But I fear it is too late now," said the priest in his most solemn tone.

Ned felt very much tempted to run. What good? He should halt if the priest gave the command. So he stood his ground just inside the open door, and summoning up courage, inquired, as if for information sake: "How is that, Father Martin?"

"Ned Stafford, you have acted dishonestly and dishonourably."

"You condemn me in the wrong, Father Martin. I may have acted foolish and set a snare to catch myself. But I'm naythur a rogue nor a robber," Ned replied, sobbing pitifully.

"You have been rummaging my room in my absence, and you have got into trouble with a firm of English tobacco-nists. Is not that true?" demanded Father Martin, rising from the chair.

"Only half true, Father, that's all. As sure as you are a priest, that's all. Give me time, and I'll tell you how I got into trouble."

"Your time is up in this house, Ned Stafford. I refuse to listen to your story." Father Corish closed the door. He had acted the part of the heartless employer extremely well. How Ellen would succeed remained to be told.

"Musha, what are you cryin' about, you little oul' omadaun?" exclaimed Ellen contemptuously, seeing Ned sobbing and wiping away the tears with his coat sleeves. "You're too big a boy now to be cryin' like that. Tell me, what's after comin' between yourself and Father Martin?"

Ned told her the whole story of his transactions with London, from beginning to end, and Ellen followed him with breathless interest, as if Father Martin had never told her how matters stood.

"It's a terrible state of things entirely, Ned," she sighed,

when he had concluded. " And, worst of all, I'm the whole instigation of it. What came over me to give you that unfortunate catalogue ? "

" Won't you clear me character before the priest, when I'm gone ? " Ned appealed.

" You're not goin' at all ! " she cried. " Come up with me this minute, and I'll make everything right. Won't you stay with Father Martin, if he pays for the cigars and gets you out of trouble ? "

" I'll stay with him and pray for him all the days of my life," was the fervent answer.

And Ned Stafford kept his promise.

A COUNTRY FIDDLER

BRIAN DEMPSEY was a shoemaker by trade; but, like many another of his calling, he did not always "stick to the last." In the dull season, or indeed at the busiest of times, if the notion took him, he threw aside the tools, and shouldered the old muzzle-loader for a day after the wild duck. A few minutes' walk brought him down among the bent grown sand hills that line the sea-shore from Raven Point to Ballyconigar. Long experience had taught him the habits of the sea-birds that flock for shelter in stormy weather to the rich sloblands surrounding Ibar's far-famed island home, called Begerin. Granted a stiff breeze from the nor'east, Brian seldom came home empty-handed. He could fix, almost to the hour, the arrivals and departures of the various tribes; he could tell their favourite resorts, where the plover were yesterday and where to-day, whether the flight of the wild duck would be north or south, landward or seaward, so accurately that one would think he had been supplied with a guide-book and official time-table, or else had received secret information as to their manœuvres. Sometimes, no doubt, the birds baffled him, despite all his foreknowledge, and he had to be content with the less classical sport of rabbit shooting. "They're better than nothing," he used to remark apologetically to the neighbours along the road, when they stopped him to count the rabbits slung across his shoulder on the gun-barrel.

Brian's thatched cabin and triangular plot of land stood on the brow of the hill where the sand carts halt and the farmers pile on their full loads of dripping sea-weed. There was nothing about the cabin to attract any special notice save a signboard nailed above the door, with the simple inscription, "Bootmaker," rudely printed, white on black. The flower plot in front had gone beyond reclamation. The box shrub that once served as a border to a gravelled pathway had grown into a huge, ugly hedge, shutting out air and

sunshine from the fusty apartment known as the parlour. The kitchen, Brian's workshop, would have been, in like manner, at the mercy of a wildly luxuriant growth of escalonia, had he not been obliged in self-defence to attack it betimes with the hatchet, or otherwise abandon his trade altogether. A whitewashed wall, just too high to step across without the aid of a stile, kept stray goats and donkeys from trespassing, and provided seating accommodation for strollers and customers. The iron gate in the centre badly needed painting, and was so unaccustomed to open that it consented only after considerable coaxing: to cross the stile saved time and trouble. In fact, the place had been going from bad to worse since the old woman died. The Widow Dempsey's cottage at one time was the snugest and tidiest on the road. Brian was an only child, and though drawing close on fifty years, his mother, to the day of her death, always referred to him as "the young fellow." He was now alone in the world, and a confirmed bachelor. Marriage had never once crossed his mind. He was wedded to the place and the people, and was welcome wherever he went.

The real secret, however, of his popularity remains to be told. Brian Dempsey was passionately fond of music. His father taught him the fiddle, and left him an almost unlimited collection of traditional Irish airs. True, indeed, he only played "by ear," as they say; but Brian Dempsey's ear was as sensitive and registered every demi-semiquaver as correctly, as the most superfine Edison record. His very ignorance of modern music was a help rather than a hindrance to him in giving a faithful rendering of traditional airs. So attached had he become to those ancient melodies that he positively refused to play modern compositions no matter how pretty and popular. Such frivolous stage music found no response, struck no sympathetic chord in his musical soul; and hence, true minstrel that he was, he would not, and could not, reproduce it.

Small wonder then that Brian was held in high esteem by the people. No social gathering was considered complete without him; and sometimes he had invitations to several the same evening. In the harvest time, especially, it was quite usual to meet a messenger from perhaps the far end of the next parish inquiring for Brian the Fiddler's house.

It was a standing joke with the neighbours to quiz Brian about the number of "sudden calls" he had in the week. But, bear in mind, Brian was not prepared to speed on every call. Unless it was to some of the old respectable families with whom he was long acquainted, he declined to accept "a piper's invitation." On the other hand, he would start at any hour and travel any distance to oblige true and tried friends, people who appreciated his services and treated him as one of the guests. Brian was a "gentleman musician," not a professional fiddler. To offer him any monetary recompense, or to suggest in any way that he was a hired hand, or even to interfere unduly with his musical programme was an unpardonable offence. Those who knew him intimately, however, had little difficulty with him, for really he was not hard to please. They let him have his own way, and it always proved the best way.

The arrival of Brian the Fiddler at the place where the gathering was to be was hailed with delight. Perchance he was delayed on the road, scouts were despatched in all haste to discover his whereabouts; and all waited in great suspense till the word went round: "All's well, Brian is here." Other musicians might be got, to be sure, but somehow the dancing was never as good. Brian not only played but also acted as conductor and stage-manager, so to speak. He seemed to hold himself responsible for the success of the whole night's fun. And not even the hostess herself was more pleased than he to hear the guests remark as they parted for home at break of day: "Never had we such a night."

Between the gun, the fiddle and the last, Brian's time was well occupied, and years sped by quickly and pleasantly. Little notion had he of the troubled times in store for him. He had never taken much interest in political movements. The Risin' of '47 came and went when he was quite a lad. Then followed the Fenian movement of '67 which seemed only to beget despondency and distrust in men like Brian Dempsey, bold Shilmaliers, whose fathers had fought at Oulart Hill and Tubberneering. Another inglorious decade was drawing to a close, when suddenly rumours of "war" began to be noised abroad once more. "Long threatening comes at last." New leaders had appeared, named Parnell

and Davitt. People were flocking fast into a new league. Hill and valley re-echoed with a new watchword: "The Land for the People." War was declared, a deadly, decisive Twenty Years' War between landlords and tenants.

Brian scarcely knew what to think of this new agitation. Had it come twenty years earlier he would have been thirsting for the fray. Now he preferred peace at any price; he was quite willing to go on paying the rent—rack-rent though it was—for the little house and plot of ground. Still, if the rest of the tenants were determined to stand out for a reduction he would not be a black sheep. In any case, it was not likely that he would be the first thrown out on the road-side.

The crisis came sooner than Brian expected. At a monthly meeting of the newly-established local branch of the League the tenants on the Dowdall estate unanimously decided to demand a reduction of fifteen per cent. on all rents due. Accordingly a deputation of the leading farmers was appointed to wait on Major Dowdall himself, and put their case before him. Needless to say, their offer was contemptuously rejected. And a few weeks afterwards every member of the deputation got notice to quit. Such high-handed action on the part of the Major only helped to goad on the tenants to resistance, and aroused great indignation throughout the district. Every post brought renewed promises of support from the Central Executive, and several prominent men, including two members of Parliament, wrote suggesting that a public meeting should be organised at the earliest possible date.

Before the week was at an end, the County was placarded with glaring green posters, announcing a monster demonstration to be held at Crowley's Cross, Sunday, October 21st. This left three weeks clear for the necessary preparations. It was all too short an interval. A platform had to be built, and arches erected at every approach, and flags painted, and banners patched, and mottoes printed, and stewards appointed, and resolutions drafted, and money collected, and refreshments provided, and—most important of all—bands invited. What of the local fife and drum band? Would it attend? All depended on Brian Dempsey. No other man could get together the members.

The Currabeg Fife and Drum Temperance Band had been established as a result of Fr. Mathew's historic visit to the county, and for a few short years was the pride of the parish. But the Famine came, and the band "broke up," and the best of the boys emigrated, and flutes and flags were stowed away in Brian Dempsey's hay-loft. Several times had Brian tried to re-start it, and failed. It had not appeared in public for two years or more. However, this was an epoch-making event in the parish. What would strangers think if the local band was absent from the demonstration? After some discussion, therefore, the Committee of management agreed to send an invitation to the Currabeg Fife and Drum Temperance Band, with a personal appeal enclosed to Mr. Brian O'Dempsey, Conductor.

Brian would have much preferred had they allowed the late Currabeg Fife and Drum Band to rest in peace. But what could he do? He was scarcely free to refuse the League. If he could secure six or seven flute players, the drums would do the rest. So he sent back a reply 'by word of mouth' to the Committee promising to do his best. In recognition of his valuable services the Committee arranged that the Currabeg Band should head the procession and take its stand next the platform. Brian greatly appreciated this mark of distinction, and every night at the practice he was sure to remind the boys how all eyes would be on them, holding as they did the place of honour. No man could work harder than Brian did during those three weeks; and the boys also, to their credit be it said, attended regularly every night from seven p.m. to ten p.m. Every night quite a crowd collected outside Brian's cabin, and arranged themselves along the wall to listen to the fifes, while the more curious of them took an occasional peep through the window to see Brian wielding the baton.

On the morning of the meeting Brian Dempsey's cottage was the centre of attraction. Most of the people came to second Mass prepared to remain about the place till after the meeting. Word having gone round that the Currabeg Fife and Drum Temperance Band had been re-started and was about to go to meet the Members, the crowd grew greater every moment. Brian was the first to appear, decorated for the occasion with a broad green sash, so

arranged as to display to advantage on the left shoulder a large harp and shamrocks worked in gold. He was received with a lusty cheer. When the man with the big drum succeeded after some difficulty in squeezing his way through the low cabin door, there was renewed cheering. In a moment Brian had his men—ten in all—in marching order. The drums rattled once, twice, thrice, and all stepped off together, followed by an immense hosting.

They had marched about half a mile and were turning the cross of Kisha when a horse and trap suddenly appeared ; and, apparently regardless of life, attempted to drive furiously through the dense crowd. Quick as thought, Seaghan Mor of hurling fame stuck his stout caman into the wheel, thereby giving the trap such a lurch that its owner was unseated and sent sprawling headlong on the muddy road. Several rushed to his assistance ; but, on discovering whom they had, quickly withdrew again and hid among the crowd. It was no other than Major Dowdall himself on his way back from Sunday Service. Regaining his feet, he brandished his whip defiantly. "Cowards ! assassins !" he yelled, his voice hoarse with anger, "lay a hand on me, if you dare." Then resuming his seat, he shouted at the top of his voice : "Clear the road, ye murderous scoundrels ! or else I will drive roughshod over the pack of you." The people allowed him to go his way unmolested, and Brian Dempsey told the band to cease playing as he passed. Poor Brian ! he had hoped to escape attention ; but, alas, he did not succeed. His gay attire and gaudy green sash marked him out conspicuously. Major Dowdall recognised him in the rear of the crowd ; and leaning over the side of the trap he muttered the threat : "Brian Dempsey, I'll be even with you for this." The words haunted Brian's mind that whole day and many a day after. The morning after the meeting Brian was arrested and brought before Sir Paul Johnson, R.M., on the charge of inciting to riot. The trial lasted but a few minutes ; for it was proved that the Currabeg Fife and Drum Temperance Band was directly responsible for the brutal attack on Major Dowdall. In passing sentence His Worship begged to remind Brian that the crime of which he had been convicted was punishable by two years' imprisonment, but that owing to his previous good record he had reduced the term to three calendar

months. To avoid all danger of disturbance a side-car was in readiness outside the barrack door. And before the news had time to spread around the parish Brian Dempsey was safely lodged in jail.

Many tragic events took place in his native parish during those three dreary months. The very week after his trial the Crow bar Brigade began its work of destruction. Bravely did the sturdy boys of Shilmalier defend their homes against bailiffs and battering-ram. But fort after fort was taken after a tedious fight. The townland of Ballyrahan was converted into one vast grazing ranch ; and only a dismal group of ruined gables remained to mark the site of the once happy village of Currabeg.

Brian heard the whole history of the campaign from some of the neighbours who happened to be in town the morning of his liberation. He would almost have preferred to remain in prison, so dejected did he feel that evening on his way back to Currabeg. But he had to return to thank the boys who barricaded the little house in his absence, and to take charge of a few articles, including the fiddle, that had been saved from the wreckage. If he wished to remain in the locality several were only too willing to keep him. But Brian did not wish to be a burden on anybody. All had enough to do to provide for their own in such a troublous time. Besides, the place and the people would never be the same. Work would be scarce, and social parties were at an end. So, trusting to luck, he turned his back on the old spot and took the road up country. If all else failed, the fiddle remained.

The Land Leauge is dead ! Long live the Gaelic League !

After almost twenty years of ceaseless agitation peace was proclaimed on the Dowdall estate and the evicted tenants reinstated in their homes. Soon men began to strive after higher and nobler ideals. The Gaelic Revival was infusing a new soul into Ireland. On every side were signs of national awakening and returning prosperity. "Ireland for the Irish" was now the rallying cry.

Nowhere was the Language Movement taken up with greater enthusiasm than in the district of Currabeg. Already its influence for good was traceable in the home, in the school,

in the playground, at the cross-roads, at the fairs and markets. Its sunshine gladdened many a young Irish heart and brightened many a cheerless homestead. They no longer feared to speak the language of their fathers; they sang once more their native songs, and gaily tripped to the music of an Irish jig or hornpipe; they cast aside the borrowed plumes of Shoneen respectability, and put on their distinctive manners and customs; they revived the national games and pastimes; in a word, they set themselves to secure what yet remained and to recover what had been lost of their national heritage.

"It can't be done, in my opinion," said Seaghan Mor at a Committee Meeting of the Currabeg Gaelic League. "We have too many irons in the fire. One thing at a time. Let us try to win the hurling match, and never mind the band contests for this year." But his proposal was defeated, the majority of the members being in favour of trying the double event. It was a difficult situation, without a doubt. Two important fixtures, the Annual County Feis and the All-Ireland Hurling Final, occurred in the month of June that year, and Currabeg was competing in both. Seaghan Mor had charge of the hurling team, and had arranged for a practice match every Sunday after evening prayers. It so happened, however, that the band held its practice about the same hour. Hence the friction. After some discussion the matter was settled amicably, and preparations went on apace. The whole parish assembled at Crowley's Cross every Sunday evening to watch the hurlers at play in the "Land League Field," so called since the big meeting in the Eighties. Seaghan Mor put the men in their places, threw in the ball, and acted as coach and referee. No better man could fill the position, for in his day Seaghan had no equal in the hurling field. Old as he was, he had not forgotten the tricks of the game; and often while the boys were putting on their coats, he would take a caman to try his favourite stroke from the seventy yards mark, fully conscious all the time that other grey-headed veterans on the ditch were looking on, quite proud of him.

Had the Currabeg Fife and Drum Band an equally proficient trainer, in all probability the parish would be victorious in both contests. Grave doubts were entertained, however,

about the success of the band at the approaching County Feis. Brian Dempsey was sorely missed. If he could be found, they might be easy about the result. The very marches and melodies selected for competition were the airs he loved most and played best. But little use in idle regret. Brian Dempsey had not been seen or heard of for years. Not unlikely he was dead and gone long ago.

At last the eagerly-awaited Sunday of the All-Ireland Hurling Final arrived. Only those who were up at sunrise had an opportunity of giving the team a hearty send-off and God-speed, for the players had a special Mass at six a.m. in order to catch the first train for Dublin. Enthusiastic crowds crushed into the carriages at every station. Anxious inquiries were made about the team, and their places on the field. And various were the opinions expressed about the chances of success. The players sat strangely silent and apparently indifferent as to all that passed. Men talk little on the way to battle.

It was a glorious hurling match. Never did two better teams enter the lists in friendly conflict. The famous Slievedarrigs were classic hurlers, every one of them. But the dashing Shilmaliers surpassed themselves that memorable day. From the moment the game began they played fierce and fast, yet not until the whistle blew was victory won. Up and down, in and out, fled the ball like a frightened bird, escaping now through the north goal, now through the south alternately, after a desperate struggle. It was blow for blow, score for score almost to the end. Up, Shilmaliers! now or never! The final rush for the winning goal was a sight worth travelling miles to witness. And the thunderous cheer that rent the air, as the crowd rushed in to cheer the victors, could be heard almost in Currabeg. Seaghan Mor got his share of the plaudits, and he, too, was carried in triumph off the field on a framework of stout camans.

There was no time to lose in getting ready for the road home. Seaghan kept a close eye on the hurlers till he had all hands safely landed at the railway station. The street outside was densely packed with people, and several itinerant musicians added to the bustle and confusion by their discordant medley of flutes, fiddles, bugles, banjos, and barrel-organs, all discoursing the latest music-hall ditties. As the

hurlers were pushing their way to the platform, a feeble old man with a violin concealed under his long, jagged frieze coat followed closely in their track and succeeded in evading the ticket-collector at the entrance gate. Taking his stand outside the carriage where Seaghan and his men were resting their weary limbs, some snoozing, others singing, he uncovered the faded, moth-eaten instrument and started the well-known rebel ballad, entitled "Boollavogue." Seaghan woke up immediately. "That's the sort of music I'd like to hear!" said he. And he listened again, his big, good-natured face beaming with delight at the familiar strains. "If Brian Dempsey is on the lands of the living, that's he playing outside. One moment, boys, till I get a look at him!" But just then the poor inoffensive fiddler was being escorted from the platform by a burly railway porter. Seaghan was determined to see him, even at the risk of losing the train. So, jumping to the platform, he rushed excitedly after him to the street way. The next moment he had the old man by the shoulder. A glance was sufficient. Though pale and emaciated for want of food, crippled with cold and much wasted with age, there was no mistaking a Dempsey of Currabeg. "May I never die, Brian Dempsey, but is this you!" exclaimed Seaghan. "What in the world is over you to stay here tramping the streets of Dublin and we wanting you so badly in Currabeg these times?"

"Aisy talk wid you," Brian replied, looking up despondently at the tall, broad-shouldered figure by his side; "Look at me! How could I have the heart to return? Nobody knows me here, and I'm happy."

"God forgive your foolish pride," said the other; "'tis delighted they'll be to see you back once more among them. Here, say you'll come, and no more about it. There goes the whistle! Give me your hand!" And grasping him in his arms, Seaghan carried him captive, to the great amusement of all the passengers. Willing hands helped them both into the carriage. The door closed with a bang. The guard frowned as he sounded his whistle for the second time. The engine panted furiously, impatient to get free. One parting shout, and off they went.

The rest is pleasant to tell and easily told. A royal

welcome awaited the hurlers. Bonfires blazed on the hills and cross-roads. The Currabeg Fife and Drum Band met them at the terminus and played triumphantly all the way home. Many lost their sleep that night, and next day work was left undone, discussing how the bold Shilmaliers had, once again, bravely fought and conquered on the hurling field.

Brian Dempsey's return was not generally known outside Currabeg till the big day of the Feis, three weeks later. He spent most of his time in the band-room tuning the fifes and preparing the boys for the contest. After great persuasion Brian also consented to let his own name be sent forward for the traditional fiddle competition, the Branch having presented him with a complete new outfit for the occasion.

It would be too long to describe Feis Locha gCarman. Enough to say Currabeg took first prize in the band contest, and Brian Dempsey defeated all comers at traditional music. The adjudicators singled out his name for special praise, when announcing the results, and expressed the hope that he would be long spared to share with the younger generation his rich store of ancient Irish melodies. Next day his picture appeared in the daily paper. And the morning after, he received a letter from Major Dowdall congratulating him on his success and offering to repair the old home in Currabeg should he decide to remain in the district. All advised Brian to accept the offer and let bygones be bygones. And so he did.

AT McGRATHS BEYOND

MARY DOYLE the post-mistress, as many continued to call her after her marriage, had promised a "big night" to the boys around the Cross of Cool-duff, provided they allowed the wedding to pass off quietly. They had done so. It was now three months since she changed her name to Mrs. Tom McGrath. The house had been done up within and without. But there was no sign of the party. If Christmas went by, possibly the whole affair might fall through. So they put the question straight to her one Saturday night when the shop was full of people.

"You can't go back of your word, Mary—Mrs. McGrath, I mean," said Johnny Gorman.

"That'll do you now, Johnny," she replied jokingly, "I haven't time to be talkin' to you." And she hurried away to attend some customers at the other counter.

But Johnny waited till she came back. "Speak to himself about it, he's the master now," she resumed.

"Not a foot," was the answer. "You made the promise and you'll have to keep it. Be all accounts, Tom hasn't the power of veto, as they say in Parliament."

"I would be only too happy to oblige, only the house is too small," she pleaded.

"We can wait for our 'stevin,'" said Johnny, determined not to be baffled by such flimsy excuses.

"And what about Father Martin?" she asked. "You heard him yourself the first Sunday of Advent denouncing dances in all the moods and tenses."

"We all know who he was drivin' at, that day. Some busybody carried him stories about the Mummers' ball in Jim Power's land league cottage a few nights before. It wasn't half as bad as they made out. In any case, Mrs. McGrath," he urged, "you're not putting yourself on a level with Jim and the like."

"Of course not, Johnny, that's very true," said Mrs. McGrath, acknowledging the compliment. "But at the

same time, Father Martin might be displeased to have a tare-a-way here on the Cross, next door his own house and right abreast the chapel, during this holy season of peace and goodwill."

"It's Christmas times, Mary, and I'll go bail Father Martin himself wouldn't think bad of comin' over for a minute or two just while he'd be drinkin' down a cup of tay, if you'd only make that bowld to ask him."

Mrs. McGrath appeared to catch on to this idea. It would be a great stroke, sure enough, to have the priest presiding at the head of the table, or sitting on her right, as she poured out the tea for the guests. Miss Lena O'Hanlon would be taken down a peg, for she was continually boasting about Father Martin because he happened to call at Knocdarrig once in a while. The only difficulty might be with Tom, he had such a knack of making a fool of himself when in company. However, he could wait for the second sitting and have a cup with the commonality. The merry scene passed before her eyes like a moving picture. She was quite captivated. Unconsciously, Johnny Gorman had struck the right note.

"I'll be thinking over it, Johnny, between this and New Year's Day," she said, after a pause.

"All right," he conceded, "we won't go too hard on you. But remember Lent'll be on us in a few weeks."

"Never fear," she replied assuringly. "You will have your wish."

To show their gratitude, Johnny and a few more of the neighbours, who had been interested listeners to the good-humoured discussion, bought a double supply of clay pipes and tobacco before leaving. Mrs. McGrath's party was an open secret through the parish a few days afterwards. Some said Tom and the wife should have more sense. Others said they had little to do with their money. Lena O'Hanlon laughed scoffingly when she heard of it. Nevertheless, all were anxious to be asked.

That same night Mrs. McGrath consulted Tom on the project. She was seated by the kitchen table, counting a heap of silver and coppers. The day's receipts were exceptionally good.

"It will be a troublesome and expensive affair, I'm thinkin', Mary," he remarked.

"We may's well face it first as last. They won't give us peace or ease," she urged.

"It would be fitter for some of them to pay us the few pounds they owe," said Tom bitterly.

"That's very true. But perhaps by throwing out a trout we may catch a salmon, as the sayin' goes," was the shrewd



She was seated by the kitchen table

suggestion. "Business people must keep the public on their hands," she added, "and if Father Martin comes, it will open some of their eyes."

"Catch him takin' tea in the post-office among a lot of 'coulauns' like Johnny Gorman and the rest."

"Oh, a little management will make that all right. We can have a special table for Father Martin and a few select friends, in the parlour; and we can fix up the dairy as a

dining room for the rest," she explained, pointing to the lean-to which Tom had constructed quite recently with the aid of a handy man.

"Very well! very well!" he replied, much against his will, "you may have your way. The sooner it's over, the better."

"Let us say the Sunday night after New Year's."

"Yes," said Tom, "it's all alike to me."

Mrs. McGrath spent the next day at the little desk in the post-office writing invitations to her friends. When reckoned, they totalled exactly three dozen. Johnny Doyle and the boys could be asked by word o' mouth. She directed Tom to look after Brian Dempsey, the fiddler, in good time, as his services were in great demand during the Christmas season.

Replies came flowing in almost by return of post. She felt very flattered, although somewhat embarrassed, by the number that accepted the invitation. The O'Hanlons were the only persons to send a rather evasive answer: they were expecting some friends from town, and hence might possibly have to disappoint. However, Father Martin's letter more than compensated for this rebuff. He adopted no shabby subterfuge. "You may expect me over," he wrote, "about six o'clock. Wishing your social gathering every success." Mrs. McGrath secured the letter most carefully; for some might doubt her word unless she could show them his own handwriting. With Father Martin present, their party would be much superior to the ordinary country dance. It was really kind of him to come.

When word got out that Father Martin was going to McGraths for tea, nobody knew what to think or say. The O'Hanlons were very much surprised and disappointed. Had they known that earlier they would have accepted the invitation unconditionally. Lena immediately sent Mrs. McGrath a postcard stating how glad she was that their friends from town were not travelling owing to the severity of the weather, and that consequently herself and Myles would arrive at Coolduff without fail on Sunday evening. On the other hand, Johnny Gorman and the boys were half sorry that the priest was to be there. They should be on their best behaviour, and they could not start dancing till he went away; not indeed that he would object, for, according to

report, he was a first hand at a hornpipe in his young days, but the time-honoured custom around Coolduff was that the man of the house and his wife should be the first couple to take the floor. On this occasion it might be all hours before Mrs. McGrath could lead off. Not a few, therefore, of the young folk were malicious enough to hope that Father Martin might be detained by parochial duties or summoned away early on a sick call. Yet it never crossed their minds for an instant to play any trick on the priest.

Mrs. McGrath examined the long list of guests. She was satisfied that no person of any consequence had been omitted. In Tom's opinion she had more than enough. Suddenly the thought occurred to him :—

"Have you Ellen Flaherty's name down?" he inquired anxiously.

"Do you mean the priest's house-keeper?"

"Of course, who else?" returned Tom, knowing well that his wife understood who was meant.

"Indeed and I have not," she confessed, without a blush. "Is it ask the priest to sit down to the one table with Ellen Flaherty!"

"Yes," said he, very sharply, "maybe Father Martin thinks more about Ellen than he does about many better-off people in the parish."

Mrs. McGrath forgot for the moment that Tom had been a boy with Father Martin, and in that way had good reason to know the dignity and authority of a priest's house-keeper.

"I haven't a doubt," was the supercilious reply, "but I won't invite her for all that."

"You won't!" he exclaimed, rising from his chair and putting on his hat.

"No!" she declared, in a most inexorable tone of voice.

"Then take care you don't regret it," said Tom prophetically. "As sure as you're born, you'll be sorry."

And taking the lantern off the dresser, he went out on his nightly tour round the farm-yard.

It was some days before Ellen Flaherty discovered to her amazement that Father Martin had promised to attend McGrath's party. She had heard the talk among the people,

but she put no "seem"¹ on it. The priest knew his place better than that, she thought. No doubt the post-mistress had assurance enough to invite him; and possibly the poor man might have consented through fear, for the same woman had a dangerous tongue. If that were the case, it was Ellen Flaherty's duty to save him from such friends. She had no peace of mind, therefore, till she questioned him about the truth of the rumour, so industriously circulated in the parish. Otherwise he might never mention the matter, he was that heedless and silent-going. Indeed, many is the mistake he would have made, had she not put him on his guard, and very little credit or thanks she ever got for her advice. Over and over again she made up her mind to let him learn sense from experience; but when a crisis like the present arose she could not conscientiously remain silent. After all, she was the priest's house-keeper.

So she introduced the topic adroitly, and in very round-about fashion, just the night before the much-talked-of spree at McGraths. Father Martin was pacing up and down the sitting-room. A stranger would fancy there was somebody with him, for the hum of his voice could be heard distinctly in the kitchen. He was preparing a few words for second Mass the next morning.

"I beg your pardon," said Ellen, as she held the door ajar. "I was thinkin' of goin' away for an hour or two to-morrow in the afternoon, if you're not dining out anywhere."

"To be sure, Ellen," he replied approvingly, "I shall be at home all the evening. Or at least," he added, recollecting himself, "I shall not be far away. Tell Ned he will find me at McGraths beyond in case a call comes."

Ellen made a desperate effort to control her feelings.

"Why then now!" she returned conventionally.

"Yes," he said, "I had to promise to put in an appearance."

"I wonder you'd make so little of yourself," she protested.

Father Martin stared at her fiercely. Ellen saw at once that she had been too outspoken.

"I'm only for your good, your reverence," she continued, in a more subdued and patronising tone, before he had time

¹ rum, heed.

to rebuke her, as assuredly he would have done in his own scathing fashion, "because from all I hear, it will be a noisy place."

"Why do you think so?" he demanded sternly. "Mrs. McGrath and her husband are two respectable, good-living people. I am quite certain that they will not tolerate any unseemly conduct under their roof."

"I hope not," said Ellen, incredulously.

"You may close the door, now," suggested Father Martin.

Thus ended the interview, abruptly and unsatisfactorily. The hundred other arguments and admonitions she had so carefully prepared, kept running through her brain the rest of the night. Never before had she been routed so ignominiously. Sleep or rest was out of the question.

She arose earlier than usual on Sunday morning with a splitting head-ache. She thought everything was reeling around her, like one time she went out in a fishing boat with Dick Sinnott. At first Mass she was obliged to remain sitting from start to finish. The congregation noticed her looking very bad.

On her way back from the chapel, Mrs. Ryan of Fairy Lane stopped her to know what was the matter. Ellen made her none the wiser. How could she?

"Thank you, all the same, Mrs. Ryan, for askin'," said she very politely.

"Don't mention it, Ellen," was the familiar reply.

"Your own health is good?" inquired Ellen.

"Never better, thanks be to God!"

"And the old woman—how is she at all?" added the housekeeper eagerly, Granny Ryan being a particular old friend of hers.

"Then to tell you the truth, she's 'angish'¹ enough. She wasn't feeling too well this morn' an' I comin' out."

"Is it long since she had the priest?"

"It's a good start. The first week of Advent or thereabout."

"And is she anointed?" Ellen asked in all seriousness.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Ryan, with some hesitation. "But she was up and about often since."

"Make sure of that at any rate," Ellen added; "the

¹ *Anguish*, miserable

neighbours would never forgive if you let your mother die without the priest."

"If she's not improved when I reach home I think I'll send for Father Martin in the course of the evening."

"By all means. Don't chance her to pass the night," was Ellen's parting advice.

Mrs. Ryan hurried off to Fairy Lane. The conversation with the priest's house-keeper had made her nervous and scrupulous concerning the old woman's spiritual needs. As might be expected, the patient of four-score winters had not improved in the short interval. Neither had she grown any weaker. There was no immediate hurry to send for the priest. She could despatch one of the children for him later on, when dinner was over and the house tidied up.

Ellen kept out of the way that evening. Father Martin was upstairs brushing his best coat and hat, ready to step across to McGraths, when the call came. It was a very striking and provoking coincidence. He had no option but to go. The small boy at the door assured him that his granny had taken suddenly bad, and was going off in wakenesses. A hastily written note of apology was sent to the post-office. It was received, as the newspapers say, with mingled feelings of joy and sorrow. Mrs. McGrath was not herself after reading it.

"Ellen Flaherty is at the back of this," she whispered aside to Tom.

"I told you so," said Tom, vindictively.

The O'Hanlons were very chagrined when they realised the situation, and they took leave of their hostess at an unseemly early hour.

But Johnny Gorman and the boys could scarcely conceal their delight. The moment tea was over, they cleared the floor, and Brian Dempsey struck up: "The Wind that Shakes the Barley."

And if the young people, free from any likelihood of supervision by His Reverence and the *quality*, did not knock music out of the floor, *ní lá fós é*.

ST. PATRICK'S NIGHT IN COOLDUFF

"**S**HADES of Palestrina!" muttered Father Corish; "but this is terrible."

It was the First Sunday of the month, and the choir was half-way through the Litany, when the pedals of the harmonium began to creak ominously. Miss Doyle, the schoolmistress, presided at the keyboard. She did everything possible to avert a breakdown. The vocalists, five females and Johnny Gorman, responded bravely to her appeal to sing out. They quickened the time in the hope of getting done before the instrument completely collapsed. Already one pedal was out of action. But Miss Doyle made the other do the work of two, and played with both hands on the treble clef.

The inevitable happened. Suddenly something snapped, and the music stopped.

"Sing away!" cried the conductress excitedly. Her voice could be heard by the entire congregation. Alas! the shock was too great. The choir became quite unmanageable without the music. It was the first time they had heard their voices to such advantage, and they became very alarmed. They floundered badly. One by one the females' voices failed. And as Johnny Gorman was only singing "seconds" he also had to give up. Then there was silence—an awkward, ignominious silence. Father Corish looked over his shoulder towards the green baize screen that sheltered the choir from the vulgar gaze; and sizing up the situation at a glance, he snatched the ceremonial from the altar steps beside him and intoned the versicle. This gave breathing space to the unhappy vocalists. They took heart again. Miss Doyle luckily discovered a tuning pipe in her pocket. It sounded once or twice while the celebrant recited the prayer. Having responded, "Amen" as solemnly as if nothing unusual had occurred, Johnny Gorman started the "Tantum Ergo" in his most vigorous style. He practically had to sing the whole hymn. A nervous tremulo was notice-

able in the ladies' voices to the end. All things considered, however, they made a creditable effort to regain their lost prestige.

Benediction over, Father Corish hurried out from the sacristy to examine the refractory instrument. The choir members had made a hasty exit. Miss Doyle, conscious of her responsibility, remained behind arranging the music. She was quite prepared to give the priest his answer if he tried to hold her responsible. The wonder was the harmonium had held so long. There was no telling how many years the old rattle-box—it deserved no better name—had done duty in Coolduff. Probably it was there since the chapel was built. It had been mended repeatedly, and only she knew so well how to humour it, the parish would have been often without benediction. Not another school-mistress in the county would have condescended or ventured to perform on such a despicable instrument. She had several other things to say. Naturally, therefore, she was somewhat disappointed to notice Father Corish smiling as he approached. She would much prefer had he taken the affair more seriously, and thus given her an opportunity of expressing her feelings fully and forcibly. His good-humoured face disarmed her, at least for the moment. Father Corish knew from experience that the situation required delicate handling.

"I really pitied you, to-day, Miss Doyle," he said sympathetically; "it is the old story of the pitcher going to the well just once too often."

"Oh! don't mention it," she replied; "I almost died for very shame."

"Accidents will occur, Miss Doyle. No blame can be attached to you."

"Accidents!" she exclaimed. "I warned you months and months ago about this matter."

"You did, indeed. That is very true," he assented.

"It is too bad," she urged, "that no steps have been taken to purchase a new instrument."

"You speak as if I had unlimited funds at my disposal, Miss Doyle."

"The people are only waiting to be asked. Several spoke to me about a new harmonium."

"Indeed," remarked Father Corish, dubiously.

"Yes, and no wonder. They are thoroughly ashamed of this article," and she threw back the faded cover off the harmonium.

"Don't trouble, Miss Doyle, don't trouble. It is an old acquaintance of mine, and with all its faults I would think bad of parting with it. Perhaps, if the pedals were repaired?"

"Really! Father, you are not serious in making such a suggestion. It is a waste of money to go on repairing it any longer."

"But you ought to know that Coolduff parish cannot afford to expend twenty pounds or more on a new harmonium. There are a hundred other things more badly needed in the chapel, seats, candle-sticks, vestments, and so forth."

"I am sorry I cannot agree with you, Father," she said, rather sharply. "To be candid with you, and give you timely warning, myself and the choir members have decided to hand in our resignations unless you provide us with a better instrument. We cannot be making a laughing-stock of ourselves before the parish." And taking up her prayer-book and umbrella, she moved down the chapel.

Father Corish genuflected and overtook her at the porch door. "Just a moment, Miss Doyle!" he called, as she sprinkled her forehead with holy water from the old granite font. "Could you suggest any means of raising funds to purchase the new instrument?"

"Surely," replied the school-mistress, "we are no poorer than our next-door neighbours in Currabeg. They held a concert in a tent a few Sundays ago, and made thirty pounds clear profit, I hear, to buy a new pulpit, no less. What we want here is someone to lead."

"I see, I see," repeated Father Corish, taking the hint. "But," he added, "I have no experience in organising such things."

"It is never too late to begin," she retorted. "I see no difficulty in the way of a concert. Indeed the poor people of Coolduff want something to break the dull monotony."

"Very well, then. Set to, immediately, and organise some form of entertainment. You have my sympathy and sanction."

"I shall do my best," she said, in all sincerity.

"Thanks very much," said Father Corish, offering her his hand, as if to clinch the bargain. "I shall mention the matter to the congregation next Sunday morning."

Miss Doyle raised her umbrella, and hurried off with a light heart to Mrs. McGrath's, the post-office, where she found the choir members seated comfortably in the little parlour off the shop, waiting to hear the result of the interview.

Father Corish crossed the road and made a short cut home through the haggard. It was after dinner hour.

II

The following Sunday, Father Corish apologised at both Masses for the regrettable incident that day week, owing to the very unseemly break-down of the harmonium. He not only exonerated their popular school-mistress, but took the opportunity to publicly thank herself and the other members of the choir for their generous and valuable services. The present instrument, he explained, was in a deplorable condition, and utterly beyond its labour. It was absolutely necessary to purchase a new harmonium if they wished to uphold the good name of the parish of Coolduff. Miss Doyle had already consented very kindly to organise a grand entertainment so as to lighten the financial burden on the parish and to provide an enjoyable evening for young and old. They had heard a good deal, lately, he continued, on the need of brightening rural life, and it was time for Coolduff to make a start. If their first attempt proved successful, they might look forward to many similar entertainments. He trusted, therefore, they would attend in large numbers.

The concert was the sole topic of conversation after Mass. On the whole, the idea was received very favourably. A few, to be sure, were inclined to be pessimistic. It was no time of the year for such things. The school-mistress, they said, was rather old for work of this kind. There was no suitable place in Coolduff to hold a concert. A raffle would have been a much easier way of making money. It was too much amusement the young people had. Coolduff had got on without concerts for the past fifty years: it would soon be as bad as Currabeg.

Such comments, however, were made behind backs. At the preliminary meeting of the organising committee held

in the school-house the greatest enthusiasm prevailed. Father Corish presided, and Johnny Gorman kindly consented to act as secretary. There was a large attendance of choir members, past and present. Looking around the room, Miss Doyle recognised several who had not attended a choir practice for many a long day. She said nothing. But she could not help asking herself the question what right had they to come there—Miss Lena O'Hanlon especially, the "lady" who left in a pout because she was not allowed to sing solos. And there was Miley O'Hanlon, too, with not a note in his head. Miss Doyle decided to bide her time and pretend not to notice their presence.

The Rev. Chairman having expressed his delight to see so many of the old members back again, said the first question to be decided was the date of the concert. All agreed that St. Patrick's Day would be the most suitable. Father Corish was asked to draft the poster, and consented. It was to be printed in two colours and headed, "Coolduff Grand Concert." Miss Lena O'Hanlon reminded him to mention "carriages at 9 p.m." Tom McGrath who had just arrived back from the honeymoon and taken up residence in the post-office, scoffed at the idea of mentioning an hour for carriages, and proposed that the old motto, "God Save Ireland," be placed at the foot of the placard. Beyond that, Father Corish was given a free hand.

A long discussion followed on the best place to hold the concert. Father Corish favoured the school-house. It was conveniently situated, easily seated, comfortable, and rain-proof. But the majority were of opinion that it would be altogether too small. They were certain to have an immense crowd at their first entertainment. Miss Doyle assured the meeting she could have sold tickets that very day so eager were the people to secure seats.

"What about fitting up a hay-shed?" said Tom McGrath. "Miley Hanlon, there, has a splendid shed, if he could see his way to give us the use of it."

"It happens to be full of hay, just now, Tom," Miley answered dryly. "Only for that ——"

"Sure enough! Faith I'm after forgettin' the seasons of the year since I got married and started shop-keepin'," said Tom, turning his face to the wall with the laughing.

"Why not get the Gaelic League tent as they did in Currabeg?" suggested Mrs. McGrath.

"We may not be Irish enough to sing in that," Miss Lena O'Hanlon objected sarcastically.

"We haven't much to boast of, anyway," said Tom. Everyone knew whom he meant.

"Miss O'Hanlon is only joking, Tom," said Father Corish, to prevent a controversy.

"My objection to the tent, Mr. McGrath, is that the acoustic properties are very unsatisfactory," Miss Lena explained, in a superior tone of voice.

"That may be the case, all right," said Tom: "I don't pretend to know much about microbes or contagious disease of any sort, thanks be to goodness; but this much I know that the tent was burstin' with people in Currabeg beyond, and not one was a bit the worse after it."

Father Corish lay back in his chair and laughed convulsively. All took the liberty of doing likewise.

"I would like to have your opinion, Miss Doyle," inquired the Rev. Chairman, regaining his dignity. "You have been very silent all the time."

"Oh, my opinion has not much weight here," said the school-mistress.

"By no means," said Father Corish; "You are the person most concerned."

"Well, personally," she said, "I am in favour of the tent. No doubt it is an unsuitable season of the year for a marquee performance, but the people won't mind the cold, when packed together. And as to the acoustic properties, trained singers make themselves heard in any hall."

"That's true, anyway," interposed Mrs. McGrath, "for when we were on the honeymoon Tom brought me to a theatre surely twice as big as a circus tent, and still-an'-all the singin' would delight you."

Miss Lena O'Hanlon smiled. Father Corish kept quite serious, and only remarked: "Quite so, Mrs. McGrath, quite so."

"There's no use stayin' here all day," spoke up Johnny Gorman. "I propose that we apply for the use of the tent."

"I second that," shouted Dick Sinnott, the postman,

away down near the door. Naturally he supported Mrs. McGrath's side.

This ended the discussion. Johnny Gorman was directed to write that very night about the matter. And Mrs. McGrath promised that Tom would lend a horse and car and look after the erection of the tent in the pump field aback of the chapel. "He has little or nothing else to do," she added.

"So far so good," said Father Corish, "now let us consider the programme."

"May I ask do you intend to rely altogether on local talent, or will you invite artistes from town?" inquired Lena O'Hanlon.

"I think we ought to confine ourselves to the parish. There may be trouble with strangers," objected the school-mistress.

"I know several prominent vocalists who would be only too delighted to assist," Miss Lena continued, not heeding her opponent.

But Miss Doyle was determined to block this proposal. If Lena O'Hanlon were allowed to bring whom she liked, the concert would develop into a social evening at Knocdarrig House. Invitations would be sent broadcast. The distinguished artistes would be commandeered and conducted to Knocdarrig for supper and a big dance after the concert. Common people like herself and Johnny Gorman and the other choir members would be left out in the cold. The O'Hanlons were a pushing sort. They never lost an opportunity of advertising themselves.

"That is very kind of you, Miss O'Hanlon," said Father Corish. "It will be a great attraction to have trained singers from town."

"Who's going to pay their expenses?" demanded Johnny Gorman.

"Oh, their expenses will be very trifling," Lena replied. "All of them are intimate friends of mine, and will be my guests at Knocdarrig."

"I thought as much," muttered the school-mistress, aside to Mrs. McGrath.

"Why don't ye speak up?" said Johnny Gorman, addressing the junior choir members, who sat mutely behind

backs during the meeting. "You have as good a right to sing as strangers."

"Where would we be only for them?" Miss Doyle remarked.

Father Corish tapped the table with his pencil and called for order. "Please address the chairman, Mr. Gorman," he said.

"Well, to speak out my mind," Johnny replied, "I may say I'm entirely opposed to the introduction of strangers. It would be very unfair to pit trained singers against our own girls here."

"It will be an education for them," retorted Miley O'Hanlon, determined not to have Lena put down altogether.

"It's money we want to make," interrupted Mrs. McGrath. "The people would rather be listenin' to their own. What do the Coolduffs know about operatics?"

"Nothing whatsoever!" exclaimed Miss Lena contemptuously; and she fingered her chatelaine uneasily as if about to leave the room.

"There is something in what you say, Mrs. McGrath," said Father Corish. "A country concert for a country audience."

"That's just it. Now you have it, your reverence."

"I see no way out of the difficulty except to take a vote on the question," Father Corish concluded. "All in favour of a purely local concert put up their hands."

There was no need to count the votes. The O'Hanlons were alone in their opposition. Miss Doyle looked around triumphantly. She could not resist rapping the desk with the handle of her umbrella when the Rev. Chairman announced that the concert artistes should be selected exclusively from Coolduff parish. That meant the school-mistress would have the whole management and the whole credit.

It was arranged to hold practices in the school-house three nights a week. Lena O'Hanlon allowed her name to be put down for two songs; she preferred, however, to practise at home in Knocdarrig, being always accustomed to a concert pitch piano. Moreover her songs required a violin obligato accompaniment.

"Just fancy!" said the school-mistress to her friend,

Mrs. McGrath, as the meeting dispersed ; " a concert pitch piano and a violin obligato ! ! "

" Don't be talkin' to me about her," protested the other, " she's full up of conceit and goster, she is."

III

On Monday morning, the eve of St. Patrick's Day, Tom McGrath started for Mulrahan railway station, just two Irish miles from the cross of Coolduff. The tent had arrived. Ned Stafford was on the road before him with the priest's mare and a dray cart he borrowed from Foley's mill. With the aid of the station-master and a few more they succeeded in loading the tent and its multifarious accessories on the two vehicles. Ned took charge of the poles, spars and ropes. As he said himself, he was like one returning from a shipwreck. Tom McGrath was perched high on a pile of canvas, and with difficulty retained his seat as he jolted through the gateway. It took them almost an hour to get to the pump field aback of the chapel.

A considerable crowd had gathered through curiosity to see the tent. To add to the confusion, Miss Doyle had just let out the scholars. They never had such fun, dragging ropes here and there, and tumbling on the bales of canvas. Tom McGrath warned them several times to behave themselves and run home to dinner. At last he lost his temper and seizing his ash-handle whip chased the youngsters down the road. He came back panting.

" I didn't bargain for this job," he grumbled, as he surveyed the tangled heap of tackle. There was no knowing where to begin. His whole trouble was to find the big pole to put in the centre ; for he foolishly believed that all tents are circular. Ned Stafford knew well the tent was four-cornered, and had said so several times.

" I believe you're right," Tom admitted reluctantly.

" It took you a long time to see it," said Ned.

So they began the work of erection. Before they had made much progress, who should arrive but Dick Sinnott, the postman. Dick had been a sailor in his day, and was a recognised expert at lashing a spar.

" How are you getting on ? " said he, standing with his arms across the wooden gate.

"How do you think?" answered Tom gruffly.

"Oh, faith if I know," said Dick. "I had no harm in askin' the question."

"We're blind and bothered with people askin' foolish questions. Better make yourself useful and fetch a sledge or a spade. It's workers and not walkin' gentlemen we want here."

"You'll get a sledge beyond in the car-house," said Ned, pointing across the road to the priest's haggard.

Dick Sinnott did as he was told. For safety, *moryah*! he left his braided uniform with Father Corish's housekeeper and returned to the field in his shirt sleeves.

"If you'd take my advice," suggested Dick before he had well arrived, "you'd keep down more in the hollow, for I'm thinkin' 'twill come to blow, the way the clouds are looking."

Tom McGrath had marked out the upper corner of the field so that the tent could be seen from a distance. Besides, he objected to have singing and dancing too near the chapel and the graveyard.

Were it not for Dick's superior knowledge of ropes and canvas, however, Tom could never have rigged up the tent. Even with his valuable assistance it was far into the night before everything was ship-shape. The idle spectators had long since dispersed, and all was quiet on the cross.

"I wish I was home in Fairy Lane, now," said Dick, as he wished his friend good-night.

"And where's your coat?" was the reply.

"Oh, tare-an-ouns!" he exclaimed, "didn't I leave it beyond in the priest's kitchen, thinking we'd be done hours ago."

"They're gone to bed, now, I doubt," said Tom. And with that he faced for the post-office, leaving poor Dick to do the best he could.

The light from the little oratory lamp led Dick to believe that someone was up in the priest's house. So he stepped around as noiselessly as he could on the rough sea-gravel to the hall door. He knocked, at first gently, then more boldly. There was no response. At times he thought he heard foot-steps inside. He examined both door-posts for a bell. Eventually he discovered the tiny ivory button, and pressed it. He could hear nothing; so he pressed it again and again.

The next moment a window went down with a bang. "Who's there?" exclaimed Father Corish excitedly.

"I beg pardon, your reverence," muttered Dick.

"Is it an urgent sick call? if not, why ring the bell in this unearthly fashion?"

"No, Father; it's all a mistake."

"Tell me *what* you want, then," demanded Father Corish.

"The housekeeper has a coat for me, your reverence."

"This is no hour of the night to come looking for a coat."

"I know that, your reverence. And I wouldn't come only it's not my own coat."

"Is it one of my coats, she promised you?"

"No, Father."

"Then who owns the coat?"

"I suppose it belongs to the government, your reverence."

"Do you mistake this house for a police-barrack, good man?"

"I know where I am, right enough," said Dick, fearing the priest might think he was drunk.

"More shame for you, if you do, to come here annoying the priest at the dead of night. Who are you at all?"

Dick was afraid to make known his identity. He would call for the coat early next morning, and bind the housekeeper to secrecy. "It's all right, your reverence, we'll l'ave it so," said he, moving away from the door.

"Begone out of the place at once, you villain!" cried the priest, now thoroughly convinced that the intruder was on mischief bent.

"That I'll do, and no mistake," muttered Dick to himself, as he retraced his steps to the road. And he struck out for home in his shirt-sleeves. His wife was unkind enough to say it served him right for staying out so late.

IV

For the season, St. Patrick's Day was remarkably calm and mild. Many feared it was a pet day. On every side the hope was expressed that it would keep up till night. If so, the concert would be a success, financially at least. Fortunately it did. Drawing on to sunset, cars came rattling by every road to the cross of Coolduff. The crowd grew bigger and bigger around the tent. Several hucksters arrived

from town, and erected booths on the road-side close to the entrance-gate. The concert was fixed for six o'clock, but there was some unaccountable delay in starting. The sound of hammering inside told the impatient audience that the stage arrangements were not yet complete. Father Corish stood on guard at the door, trying to keep order. The crush was dreadful. At last he sent for Tom McGrath to know the cause of the delay. It was monstrous to keep the people standing in the cold. But Tom sent back word that unless the priest came behind the scenes there was danger of the entertainment falling through completely, owing to a dispute between the school-mistress and Lena O'Hanlon.

When Father Corish arrived, the two ladies were standing at opposite ends of the piano. Miss O'Hanlon contended that the piano should be placed on the stage as was invariably the custom at high-class concerts. The school-mistress preferred to have it immediately in front of the stage so that she might be able to conduct the children's choir. Moreover, Brian Dempsey, the fiddler, refused to sit on the stage.

Having heard both sides the distracted priest had a word in private with the school-mistress. He admitted she had a grievance. But there was no getting over the fact that the piano was Miss O'Hanlon's, and they should consult her wishes. The school-children, he explained, would gain confidence by having their teacher closer to them. And as for Brian Dempsey, he would agree after a little coaxing. Miss Doyle consented with reluctance. The piano was lifted safely on to the platform. Father Corish returned to his post; and drawing aside the canvas, made the welcome announcement that all was ready. In a few minutes the tent was full to overflowing.

The interior was lit by several hurricane lanterns, lashed to the upright poles. A row of candles served as foot-lights. Car rugs and window curtains, mostly the property of Father Corish, were used as side-wings. The stage was supported on six beer barrels, carefully concealed with thick green muslin. Father Corish was an ardent Temperance advocate, and only under protest had he consented to have barrels utilised.

The concert opened with the school children's chorus

"The Minstrel Boy," in unison. As Miss Doyle put them in their places, proud fathers and mothers in the audience rose to their feet and craned their necks to get a good look at the dear little pets. "There she is on the left!"—"Look at our Jimmy, will you, right in the centre!"—"Isn't that young Moloney away at the back?" And so on, till Father Corish was obliged to stand up in his place and appeal for silence.

The school-mistress then struck the key-note in very pronounced fashion. Turning slightly round, she was about to give the signal to start on the fourth beat. Merciful goodness!! The innocent choristers had turned their backs on the audience and were shuffling over to the piano. They had received strict orders to keep near the teacher and never to take their eyes off the baton. It was necessary, now, to cancel the standing orders. They were to remain facing the audience, and, on no account to look back at Miss Doyle. Neither did they. The result was lamentable. At the end of the first verse, they were hopelessly out of tune. Miss Doyle threw up the accompaniment in despair. But one way or another they struggled through, the boys romping home several lengths ahead. The audience clapped and cheered enthusiastically as the youngsters filed off the stage. And the general verdict was that the school-mistress only put them out, with the piano. Miss Doyle knew, however, that Lena O'Hanlon was to blame for all.

Ned Stafford next carried out a chair, and put it in the centre of the stage. The audience laughed; and a voice from the rear shouted "Good man, Ned!" He rushed into hiding. But Miss Doyle met him at the side-wing and sent him back to move the chair nearer to the piano. This time he got a great cheer.

There was boisterous applause when Brian Dempsey limped out with the fiddle, half concealed under his coat.

"A body would think you never saw me afore," said Brian, settling himself on the chair.

Unlike our modern musicians, he lost no time tuning up, but started "The Sailor's Hornpipe." Without a moment's warning, Johnny Gorman jumped out from the back and made the boards rattle with heel and toe.

The tent was nearly torn down. Men scrambled forward,

and tried to stand on one another's shoulders. Some made desperate efforts to climb the smooth poles. Women stood erect on chairs and forms.

"Sit down! Sit down!" yelled the rest indignantly.

Again Father Corish had to intervene. He beckoned at Brian to stop the music. Johnny rested on one knee, and wiped the sweat from his face with a check handkerchief.



The Violin Obligato

Soon order was restored. "Now go ahead, Brian!" said Father Corish. And Johnny Gorman took the floor, fresher than ever; for some of his best steps remained to be seen.

"The next item on the programme," announced Ned, advancing to the footlights, "is a solo by Miss Lena O'Hanlon, with a violin obligato accompaniment."

"This'll be something worth while," whispered Mrs. McGrath sarcastically to her neighbours in the front seats.

Miss O'Hanlon glided gracefully across the stage holding the music in her left hand. A strange visitor, whom nobody knew, played the piano. And Professor Blackhead had come all the way from town to supply the violin obligato. The audience were so overpowered by the grandeur of the display, that they forgot to applaud. A reverential silence prevailed.

"Miss Lena O'Hanlon will now sing for you, 'Addio-Amore,' by the celebrated composer, Pecorini," said the professor, raising the violin to his chin.

The people cheered, thinking, of course, that Miss O'Hanlon was about to sing in Irish. She had not proceeded far when they found their mistake. "Faith if that isn't quare Irish!" exclaimed an old man in the centre of the tent. There was considerable tittering and talking during the remainder of Miss O'Hanlon's song. The applause as she retired was unmistakably half-hearted.

The following also appeared in the first half of the programme.

<i>Song</i>	. .	NED STAFFORD	. .	"Dinny Byrne the Piper"
<i>Piano</i>	. .	MISS K. DOYLE, N. T.		Fantasia
<i>Dance</i>	. .	COOLDUFF N. SCHOOL.		Four-hand Reel
<i>Recitation</i>	. .	MILES O'HANLON	. .	"Fontenoy"
<i>Song</i>	. .	DICK SINNOTT	. .	"The Croppy Boy"
<i>Chorus</i>	. .	COOLDUFF N. SCHOOL		"The Boys of Wexford"

During the interval pipes were blazing. All complained of the cold. Some said, indeed, it was time to be going home. But Father Corish invited all to remain as the second portion of the programme was well worth waiting for. Very few left.

In her eagerness to retrieve her reputation Miss Lena O'Hanlon was the first to re-appear. She had intended to sing her favourite piece from Faust; but, in consideration for her country audience, she decided to give instead, "Killarney." Unfortunately she forgot the words of the last verse and was forced to give up abruptly. The audience encouraged her to try it again. She declined. Miss Doyle laughed behind the scenes, and was overheard making repeated reference to the violin obligato. It was not nice of her, though very natural.

The event of the evening, in every sense of the word, was

the eight-hand reel contributed by the members of the Coolduff Fife and Drum Band, eight dashing young fellows, none measuring less than six feet, and straight and supple as osier twigs. Brian Dempsey had trained them to perfection. He was proud of them, and well he might. His old face beamed as he set them in motion to the well-known reel, "Bushlin' the Barley." They went at it with a will. People wondered how the stage withstood the beating of so many feet. Some even fancied they saw it oscillating!

— The next moment all was over. Down went the stage with a loud crash. Only two or three of the dancers succeeded in jumping to *terra firma*. The rest lay, heads and heels, among the broken planks and beer barrels. Brian had a miraculous escape. There he was, the sole survivor, sitting with his arms clasped about his fiddle, and stuck to the chair in sheer fright.

The audience shrieked and tried to escape out under the canvas. Standing amidst the debris, Father Corish implored them to retain their seats, that all were safe. His words helped to abate the panic. He then expressed regret that such an untoward accident had marred what would otherwise have been a most enjoyable evening. Thanking them again for their generous support, he declared the performance at an end.

Tom McGrath climbed on to an up-ended plank behind Father Corish, and called out: "Three cheers for the Curate of Coolduff." They responded with three times three.

"The case was never so bad but it could be a great deal worse," said Tom very stoically when all had cleared away.

"Yes, Tom," replied the priest; "but we would have done better without the beer barrels."

Financially the concert could not be beaten. Johnny Gorman left a heavy hand-bag in the priest's parlour, and warned Ellen the housekeeper to have a close eye to it; for as well as he could reckon it contained all but £40.

A new harmonium—Irish manufacture, too!—arrived in the parish a few weeks afterwards. It was heard for the first time in the month of May. Everybody was delighted with it.

But nobody can tell the date of the next concert in Coolduff.

BAREFOOT SEAMUS: "SEAMUS GAN BHROGA"

VERY few outside the parish had ever heard tell of Currabeg National School till Feis Loc Carman, 1902. For fifty years or longer it had stood concealed and sheltered under a bunch of ash trees, much older than itself, just outside the village. Visitors to the locality seldom looked the way of it; motorists rushed by the gate with such unseemly haste that the County Council was forced to erect a sign-post in order to save both pupils and teacher from an untimely end. Mrs. Cuddehy, the school-mistress, was grateful to have received even this mark of recognition from the public. Furthermore, she could not afford to lose a single scholar, her average attendance being barely five-and-forty, so sparsely populated was the district of Currabeg. Little indeed, she dreamt that there were such stirring times in store for her and that the fame of her school, so long belittled and ignored, would be noised abroad and recorded in the columns of the local papers.

Mrs. Cuddehy was not a Wexford woman. She had the good fortune to be born of Irish-speaking parents in a remote corner of Munster. Whether she liked it or not, Irish was her native language. It was the irony of fate that she was obliged to make a living by teaching others a foreign tongue. Scarcely ten times since her arrival in Wexford County had she used a word of Irish. In fact, no one was more surprised than herself to find how readily the phrases came back to her lips that historic Sunday night when Father Fleming, gathering young and old around him in the school-house, started a branch of the Gaelic League. He was only a year ordained, and Currabeg was his first curacy. The parishioners took to him, so boyish-looking was he and gentle-mannered, but they knew next to nothing about this new movement of which he spoke so enthusiastically off the altar at second Mass that morning. He had referred to the labours of some

priest called O'Growney, who, it seems, died a martyr to the cause of the Irish language in far-away Los Angeles. It was news for them to hear that Maynooth had a flourishing branch of the new organisation, and that Irish was frequently heard in the College grounds and class-halls. The watch-word of the Gaelic Revival "Gan Teanga, Gan Tir"—No Language, no Nation—sorely puzzled the harmless inhabitants of Curragh. Had they not been struggling all their lives to hold the land against bailiffs and battering-rams? And had they not been taught from a thousand platforms that the one and only thing necessary to make Ireland a Nation once again was Home Rule in College Green? However, Father Fleming would be disappointed if they did not attend the meeting. So they strolled up the road after evening devotions and loitered in groups about the ditch opposite the school-house, nobody wishing to be the first to enter. At last the priest arrived and coaxed them inside like so many children.

The little room was packed, as it never was before. The majority of those present had not been there since their emancipation from school attendance on Confirmation Day. Years had brought no change apparently. The unpainted deal forms still bore traces of injuries inflicted by their hands long, long ago. They recognised, to their shame, dates and signatures inscribed on the window-panes and wainscoting. The familiar old map of the world with its unpronounceable names from Tierra-del-Fuego to the Archipelago, was hanging in the same old spot over the fire-place. They had almost forgotten that the world was so big, for few of them had gone in search of riches or pleasures beyond the bounds of Carnsore and Scollop Gap. And there was the harmonium, too, honeycombed with age and broken-hearted. You would fancy its soul had fled. But no; it only required the touch of Mrs. Cuddehy's hand and the aid of artificial spiration to show that still it lived.

Father Fleming did not wait to be moved to the chair. If he had, he would probably have remained in *status quo*. He pushed his way to the top of the school, and, taking his stand on the ancient rostrum, where Mrs. Cuddehy was accustomed to sit every morning marking the roll, he expressed his delight to see so many present notwithstanding

the short notice. He was greeted with boisterous applause. Having explained the aims and objects of the Gaelic League, and impressed upon them their national duty of reviving Ireland's ancient language, he reminded them of the exceptional advantage they enjoyed in Currabeg parish in having the services of a born Irish speaker, their esteemed and popular school-mistress, Mrs. Cuddehy. This personal reference was received with prolonged cheers, during which the unassuming female teacher held a copy book before her face to hide her blushes. It was the first time she had heard her praises sounded in public, and she was at a loss how to look. However, when her turn came to reply, she surprised everybody by her fluency of expression in the grand old tongue. To be sure, many were unable to follow her. Father Fleming explained. Their teacher, he said, was not only willing but overjoyed to help on the Irish revival in the parish by every means in her power.

The meeting concluded with an impromptu *ceilidh*. Brian Dempsey had the good luck to bring the fiddle with him: and at Father Fleming's request he played a selection of local dance tunes. The audience listened in appreciative and respectful silence. But the moment he struck up "The Irish Washerwoman," several voices called for Johnny Gorman, the sole surviving step-dancer of Currabeg. Johnny kindly favoured them with the few steps he remembered, and promised to practice the rest by the next evening. The young people stared in wonder and admiration at Johnny's agility and graceful movements. They had never attempted anything better than the stupid manœuvres called "sets" and "quadrilles." Father Fleming contributed to the entertainment by singing the Gaelic League rallying song, "Go Mairidh ar nGaedilg Slan." In response to repeated entreaties, Mrs. Cuddehy rendered her old favourite ditty, "Carrighdoun." All joined in the final chorus, "God Save Ireland." Then the meeting dispersed in the best of good humour. Everybody said it was the best sport they had for many a day. They looked forward to having the same again very soon. And so they had, only ten times more enjoyable and inspiring.

A few days after, Father Fleming called into the school and announced that he had received a copy of the syllabus

for Feis Locha gCarman. The school-mistress eyed him suspiciously. Would he be so foolish and inconsiderate as to expect her pupils to compete? Little he knew about the over-crowded programme and the net-work of rules and regulations confronting the present-day national teacher like a barbed wire entanglement. She was prepared to go on teaching Irish stealthily. But if her name got up in that respect, the Inspectors might be down on her. Then, too, there was the worry and expense of bringing a parcel of children to the Feis. All the responsibility would rest on her shoulders. No doubt it would be grand to win a prize or two. Defeat, however—especially at the hands of some newly-fledged, college-trained assistant—would be equally humiliating. Such were the thoughts that flashed through her mind, as Father Fleming enumerated the various competitions in the syllabus.

"But, Father," said Mrs. Cuddehy, "it's impossible to find time for everything. What between kindergarten and science and cooking and hygiene and gymnastics I'm fairly distracted."

"I quite understand," he replied, "and I heartily sympathise with you. Irish, I admit, is not included among the pet subjects and hobbies of the Board Inspectors. I know you could curry more favour by teaching Seamus Conway there how to find the specific gravity of mercury or how to graduate a thermometer. But, Mrs. Cuddehy, you cannot deny that national teachers have duties to their God and duties to their country, above and beyond their duties to boards of education and paid officials. As you teach catechism for God's sake, so teach Irish for your country's sake. As the child has a soul to save, so has young Ireland a soul, endowed with three God-given faculties, memory, understanding, and will: memory that she may link the present with the glorious past and live anew in knowledge of her sires; understanding, that she may know her true destiny; and will, that she may secure her national salvation, despite of foes and false friends. So take heart, Mrs. Cuddehy. 'Where there's a will there's a way.'"

"I suppose so," she assented dubiously. "But, Father, won't you give a look in as often as you can just to say an encouraging word?"

"By all means, Mrs. Cuddehy. Nothing will give me greater pleasure. And if you want books or the like, don't be shy to let me know."

"But how shall we get the children to Enniscorthy all the way?" she added.

"Never fear. Leave that to the committee and myself. There's no use meeting trouble half-way. You get the knowledge into their heads and we'll get them into town, even if we have to hire a motor car."

"That would be delightful!" exclaimed the school teacher, in fancy, stepping into an automobile, there and then, for the first time in her life.

The moment Father Fleming left, Mrs. Cuddehy told the pupils all about the Feis and the possible motor drive to Enniscorthy. Their joy could not be confined for the rest of that school-day, and before sundown the news was spread in every corner of Currabeg.

Two months remained for preparation. Mrs. Cuddehy had no more trouble with her daily roll-call. Even Seamus Conway, the worst sleepy-head in the school, was standing with his back to the door every morning waiting to be let in, for he had the honour to be selected on the team representing Currabeg in Book I. O'Growney. The singing, too, was a great attraction. Mrs. Cuddehy had the pedals of the harmonium repaired, and the children loved to march round the desks to the strains of "O'Donnell Abu," which was the chorus appointed for country school choirs. Long before the Feis arrived they could sing it with their eyes shut. Father Fleming said they would take a lot of beating in this event. But unforeseen difficulties presented themselves as the Feis drew nigh. The *Ceilidh* organised to meet the travelling expenses was a dismal failure. It came a thundering wet night. There was no more mention of motor cars. Father Fleming promised to procure a wagonette from town at his own expense. And, unknown to everybody, Mrs. Cuddehy bought a new suit of clothes for young Seamus Conway, so that he might be some way respectable. His parents agreed to supply the boots, but, alas! through no fault of their own, they failed to fulfil their side of the contract.

When Seamus appeared in his bare feet the morning of

the Feis, as all hands were about to start from Currabeg National School, there were unmistakable signs of dissension in the ranks. Several of the senior girls sulked, and said they would be ashamed to appear on the stage with Seamus. Mrs. Cuddehy quite agreed with them. He would disgrace the whole parish. On the other hand, however, Seamus was undoubtedly one of her bright pupils. His absence might mean defeat for the whole class. The only solution of the difficulty was to hurry into town and buy him a cheap pair of boots before the competitions commenced. This suggestion seemed to satisfy all parties. To his great delight, Seamus was allowed to take his seat on promising to carefully conceal his bare feet, especially when approaching the town of Enniscorthy.

If the binding of one wheel—to be accurate, the front wheel on the driving side—had not so frequently threatened to fall off during the journey, no doubt they would have reached Enniscorthy in good time. But, as often happens, "one trouble never comes alone." They arrived at least an hour late. Scarcely had they entered the posting establishment, when a steward wearing the official green badge inscribed "Feis Locha gCarman," rushed in excitedly, shouting "Currabeg National School, are you there?" Mrs. Cuddehy was scarcely able to answer. She realised at once that possibly her pupils might miss their competition altogether. It was out of the question now to go purchasing boots for Seamus Conway. The steward informed her that the adjudicators were tired waiting and that her want of punctuality had upset the entire time-table. She explained and apologised as best she could, while they scurried breathlessly across the bridge towards the Irish language centre. Seamus was quite unconscious of all the attention he attracted. But the more sensitive school-mistress noticed several smiling, and overheard some good-humoured jokes passed at their expense. At last they reached their destination. She was agreeably surprised to find the warm welcome that awaited her. Far from finding fault or scolding, the adjudicators said she deserved special credit for having come such a long and adventurous journey in order to help on the cause. Indeed, they appeared to be particularly kind and lenient towards the Currabeg pupils. Mrs. Cuddehy's only grievance was

that she had to remain outside while the examination was proceeding. Before this first ordeal had concluded, another steward arrived from the Town Hall in search of competitors for the country school choirs. He solemnly assured the distracted school-mistress that she had not a moment to lose if her pupils intended to compete. No sooner, therefore, was the Irish examination ended than they had to hurry away to the singing centre. Mrs. Cuddehy felt very much inclined to forego this second competition. She could scarcely bring herself to allow Seamus Conway out on a stage in his bare feet before a crowded audience. In fact, had not Father Fleming been there to ease her scruples in the matter, Currabeg National School would have forfeited some of its laurels.

"Never mind, woman, dear," said the priest. "Seamus would be ashamed to sing with new boots on him. They are not prescribed by the programme."

So out they went. And, whatever the reason was, they received a tremendous ovation. They sang much better than their teacher ever expected in the circumstances. Mrs. Cuddehy threw a furtive glance at the adjudicators in the centre of the large hall, as she retired from the stage amidst cheers. They were talking and laughing to one another. Father Fleming congratulated her, saying: "Got on splendid! Never heard them singing half as well."

During the interval for lunch, Father Fleming conducted his teacher and pupils to the hall downstairs, where the managing committee had very kindly provided refreshments for the country children. In this department also Currabeg National School was well to the fore. Mrs. Cuddehy disappeared for a few minutes and came back with a pair of ready-made boots and stockings for Seamus. It is literally true to say his heart was in his boots from that hour. He could not stop looking at them.

All that remained was to ascertain the result of the competitions. They repaired once more to the Town Hall. Great excitement reigned therein. The heat too, was excessive. The adjudicators had just stated publicly that "Event 15—Country School Choirs," was so closely contested they would be glad to hear Currabeg and Kilnamon singing once more. Kilnamon was the first to re-enter the lists.

They sang so well together and with such spirit that Mrs. Cuddehy felt despondent. Nevertheless she cheered on her own pupils, and gave them a final coaching behind the scenes. It was an anxious moment when she gave them the signal to start. They got away in fine style. Suddenly a loud tapping was heard in the direction of the adjudicators' bench, and a voice exclaimed, "Wait a second! Are you sure this is precisely the same choir that performed on the first occasion?"

"Yes; most decidedly," answered Mrs. Cuddehy, somewhat indignantly.

"I don't believe one word of it," protested the male teacher of Kilnamon, "and I can prove it, too. Where's the chap in his bare feet?"

"Here he is," she replied, singling out Seamus Conway.

"He looks very like him, moryah," was the sarcastic remark.

"Well, sure, to satisfy you, we'll let him take off his boots again," she added, jokingly.

Seamus took the suggestion seriously and hiding behind the rear rank, he slipped off boots and stockings before you could say "Jack Robinson." Everybody recognised him in his old role, and loud laughter, mingled with applause, signalled his return. They seemed to sing all the better for the amusing interruption.

"That will do! Thanks very much!" called out the adjudicator. And they retired without repeating the third verse.

The suspense of the next few minutes was intense. All eyes were on the adjudicators as they whispered one to the other and totted up figures. Then the more elderly-looking of the two rose to his feet, holding a sheet of foolscap close to his eyes, as if he had difficulty in deciphering his own handwriting. Someone suggested he should mount the chair, and he did. Facing the audience, he said: "Ladies and gentlemen, the following is the result in competition 15, for Country School Choirs—First prize, Currabeg National School; Second prize, Kilnamon National School." A spontaneous outburst of applause made the windows rattle. The adjudicator remained standing, and appealed in vain for a hearing. He had several general remarks to make on

the competitions. But nobody paid the least heed to him. So he sat down.

Eventually order was restored, and the ubiquitous steward from the language centre appeared on the stage, with another long list of results. Mrs. Cuddehy listened anxiously for Competition 4—Book I., O'Growney. "Twenty classes," the report read, "competed in this event, and the standard reached by all was most creditable. We have no hesitation, however, in awarding first place to Currabeg National School (cheers), and we recommend that a special prize be given to Seamus gan Bhroga for his clever answering."

Mrs. Cuddehy could scarcely believe her ears. Father Fleming was overjoyed and laughed heartily at the title conferred on his little friend. Several came to shake hands with Seamus, as he put on his boots again. He has worn them out and many another pair besides long since then, but from that day to this he is known by the name "Seamus gan Bhroga."

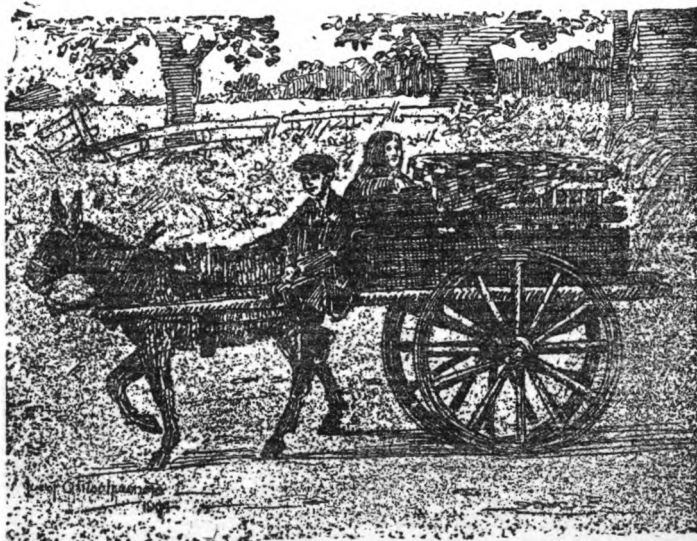
THE FOWL MARKET

ON the right hand side of the road after passing Bally-farsee bridge stands a labourer's cottage, with a sally-wood arch over the entrance gate, and a rain-barrel, painted green and white, at the gable end. Kitty Mackey lives there. Jim, her husband, works in a quarry close by. It is not a gold-mine; but by constant hammering he turns tons of stones into money every year. Jamesie, his eldest boy, helps him after school hours, and all day on Saturday. Maggie and Joe, the two youngest, give a hand to their mother about the house. Between them they always have enough, and at times a little more. The sale of the chickens occasionally brings a plenty in the home. Kitty never fails to have at least a dozen pair, and always secures the highest penny at the market. She knows well how to strike a hard bargain. Small blame to her! If the dealers live by their wits, why not she, too? They are sure not to give too much. So Kitty thought. This year especially, she was determined to ask two prices, everything being so dear on account of the war. Paddy Stafford, their next-door neighbour, got thirty pounds for an old garron of a horse that he was tired of bringing to the fair. His only regret was that he did not hold hard for fifty. The lesson was not lost on Mrs. Mackey.

At an early hour on Saturday morning, Jamesie had the ass and car ready on the road. The chickens were entrenching themselves in a thick layer of hay, having the additional luxury of a patched quilt to save them from the biting wind fresh from the Atlantic. Mrs. Mackey pulled her shawl tightly about her, and took up a huddled position in the only vacant corner of the car, her back to the storm. Jamesie sat on the side-lace with his legs dangling over the wheel. He held the rope reins in a pair of home-made knitted gloves. It was quite dark. But the lad's heart was bright with expectation. His father had given him sixpence for himself. And his mother had promised him a new suit if he were good.

He also had a commission from Joe to buy a wooden gun, so that they might play volunteers among the rocks aback of the house.

They overtook Mrs. Kelly about a mile outside the town. Jamesie was eager to take the road, but his mother did not allow him. She was glad to have a talk with her friend on market prices. Neither was the ass sorry to have the pace slowed down; and as they went along in close processional



He held the rope reins in a pair of home-made knitted gloves

order he helped himself to some of the hay provided for his brother-in-harness. Mrs. Kelly, however, objected with a stroke of her umbrella. The shock knocked Jamesie off the car. His mother attributed the accident to careless driving, and severely cautioned the boy. Had she known the real cause, it might have led to unpleasantness. Jamesie said nothing, but regained his position. They were soon in the suburbs. The lamps were lighting, and apparently most of the townsfolk were still in bed, for the blinds were drawn on

the windows as they passed. Jamesie wondered, and was by no means edified.

"They don't get up here till all hours," Mrs. Kelly remarked.

"It's they have the fine times," said Kitty; "not like us poor country people draggin' and slavin' night and day."

"Worse they're gettin'," continued Mrs. Kelly, "I remember the fowl markets years ago when the buyer would meet you three and four miles on the road."

She had scarcely said the word when a fierce-looking man with a shaggy grey side-whiskers stepped across the road, holding a lantern in his hand. He wore an oil-skin coat and a sou'wester hat.

"What have you there?" he demanded.

"Never mind, now," answered Kitty Mackey haughtily. "We'll go on to the market."

"You have a market where you are, Kitty," said Jack Broaders, changing his tone, on recognising his old customers from down Ballyfarsee direction.

"Let go the ass's head, and don't be delayin' us," Kitty shouted. She knew Jack of old. He was what is known as a "blocker."

Jack kept a grip of the tail-board and went in tow with them to the quay, where a considerable number of cars were already gathered. Jamesie, in response to a nudge from his mother, tried to make the ass break into a gallop. But some invisible force held the animal back.

"What are you lookin' for the chickens, Mrs. Mackey?" he asked again, as she climbed down off the car.

"I don't want to sell," she answered.

"Is it going to make a New Year's gift you are?" said Jack sarcastically.

"Not to you, at any rate," Kitty retorted.

"I'll give you four shillings a pair for the best of them. You won't get a better offer."

"If not, I can fetch them home with me," she replied.

"All right, Mrs. Mackey. They'll be fat by this day twelvemonths." Jack went to try his luck elsewhere.

When he had gone out of sight, Kitty moved about more freely. She inquired from those around how prices were going. All agreed that it was a poor market. The buyers

were few, and of no account. There was only one strange gentleman worth talking about. Some said he was from England. But nobody knew for certain. People were half afraid to sell to him, the times were so queer. The local dealers were bad enough to suggest that he was probably a spy. Germans are notoriously fond of fowl.

"He's comin' up this way, now, the man in knickerbockers," said Larry Connors, pointing to a tall, middle-aged man on the footpath.

"He should be dacent, by his appearance," Kitty remarked. The strange man examined Mrs. Mackey's birds and seemed to admire them. There was an air of business about him.

"May I have them at four and sixpence a pair, top market price?" said he, in a patronising tone of voice.

"Hould on a minute there!" shouted Jack Broaders, reappearing suddenly on the scene. "I'm about buying them chickens."

"I beg your pardon," said the other, much too politely in Kitty's opinion. And he moved on.

"Never mind him, sir," she protested heatedly. "The highest bidder may have them, and welcome."

"Didn't you promise to keep them twelve months for me if I wanted them? I'll leave it to Jamesie there," added Jack, appealing to the youngster, who was munching a substantial slice of griddle bread.

"In troth she didn't now," Jamesie mumbled, after a pause.

"You're a chip off the oul' block," was Jack Broader's bitter comment. And he raised his switch as if to strike the lad.

"You'll be goin' about till I have to call the police," said Kitty. She looked up and down the street. Fortunately there was no constable in sight.

"Do you think I haven't the money to pay for them?" said Jack indignantly, "see *thim*, Mrs. Mackey," he cried, taking a bundle of notes from his pocket, and thrusting them defiantly within an inch of Kitty's face.

"It's aisy be rich with another man's money," she returned.

Jack's conduct aroused the anger of the stranger.

"Are you prepared to give the lady more than my offer?" he demanded.

"I'll give four and ninepence a pair for the lot," Jack replied.

"Hold your hand, Mrs. Mackey," said the stranger gallantly, "not to be intimidated by this ruffian, I will make it the even money, five shillings."

"You may take them, and I'm thankful to you," Kitty made answer, for she was more than pleased with the price.

"You'll want me some other day, Mrs. Mackey. Mind now, I'm telling you!" was Jack's parting shot, fired from a considerable distance so that it would serve as a warning to all.

Kitty was not the least alarmed by his threat. She resumed her seat among the chickens and directed Jamesie to drive down to the Steamship yard, as the stranger directed. Notwithstanding his polite manner and generous dealing, she looked on him with some suspicion. Hence her hurry to handle the money.

There was much bustle and excitement around the wharf. Jamesie never before had seen a real live steamboat, as he himself described the antiquated craft moored by the quay. Men hurried along the gangway carrying heavy crates of fowl and deposited them not too gently near the hatchway. Then the steam crane rattled, and the chickens, geese and turkeys cackled and jabbered as they sank out of sight into the dismal hold. Jamesie felt a certain amount of sympathy for his own feathery-breasted friends in the car. Their turn was coming.

"Are you Kitty Mackey's son?" asked a bluff docker, catching the ass by the bridle and dragging him close to the wharf.

"Yes, sir," said Jamesie meekly. He had the highest respect and admiration for everybody connected with this wonderful cross-channel steamboat.

Without making any further inquiries, the docker proceeded to pack the chickens for shipment. Jamesie looked about in vain for his mother who had gone in search of the strange dealer in the knickerbockers. She returned at length to find to her dismay that her livestock had been

removed. The hay was still there, but the chickens were gone. However, the strange gentleman arrived presently, carrying a small leather bag in his hand. He took up an elevated position on the steps of the steamship office, and beckoned his customers around him. Kitty understood. She was about to receive the reward of her industry. Excited women rushed from every side; and so great was the jostling and tussling that Kitty was almost the last to be paid her money.

"I am sorry you were kept waiting so long, Mrs. Mackey," said he.

"It's all in good time, sir," Kitty replied respectfully.

"You will excuse this rather miscellaneous collection," he added, as he handed her some shabby scraps of paper, printed all in red.

Kitty scrutinised them for a moment. "I'd rather get some of the oul' fashioned money," she remarked.

"Don't worry, Mrs.," he returned snappishly, "I have given you genuine legal tender." And he stepped on to the gangway. The captain on the bridge was blowing the syren in most ferocious fashion. There was not a moment to lose.

"What'll a poor ignorant woman like me be doin' with legal tender?" exclaimed Kitty piteously, catching the stranger by the coat-tail.

"How dare you!" he yelled indignantly, wresting himself from her grasp and rushing on board.

Kitty tried to force her way after him; but a man in a navy-blue jersey pushed her aside roughly. She staggered to the rear, and, colliding with a bale of soft goods, went down ignominiously. Several ran to her assistance. She begged to be let alone. All hope was gone. The steamer had moved away from the landing stage. A bridgeless gulf now flowed between herself and the cunning stranger.

The incident gave rise to all sorts of rumours and conjectures. It would serve no good purpose to repeat them, for there are evil-minded individuals in every community. Kitty gave a deaf ear to all inquiries. Why should she make known her trouble to outsiders? Neither was there any use in telling Jamesie. He had started to cry without knowing

exactly why. Two ragged street urchins had commandeered the ass and car. And a needy housewife had appropriated therefrom a few handfuls of hay. It was true what Kitty said: "When you're down, down with you!" She decided to seek redress at the police barrack.

Having stabled the ass in Dunphy's yard, and placed the two-handled market basket in Jamesie's safe keeping, Kitty set out alone and untrammelled in search of Sergeant Mulligan. She was lucky to catch him in the barracks, for he was usually reconnoitring on a fowl market morning. Everybody knew Sergeant Mulligan, for better or worse. His name figured largely in the Petty Sessions column every week. Without him business would have been very dull with lawyers and magistrates.

"Oh, sergeant, honey, I'm in great trouble," Kitty gasped, as she squatted on the end of a long form in the spacious hall adorned with proclamations and picture posters of the latest military costumes.

"What can I do for you?" asked the Sergeant, standing to attention, just two paces in the rear.

"That's more nor I could tell you, Sergeant," said Kitty despondently, "sure you know yourself what's best."

"I know nothing about your case, good woman," he returned somewhat haughtily.

"No, Sergeant, I'm not one to come troublin' you very often. It's the first time I was ever inside a police barrack, thanks be to goodness."

"But what's your business on this occasion?" he again demanded.

"Well, I scarce know where to begin, I'm that distracted at the loss of my little share," Kitty replied.

However, when she did begin, she gave a most detailed account of her adventures on that fateful morning, from the moment she left Ballyfarsee till herself and the wily foreigner parted in anger on the gangway.

All the while, Sergeant Mulligan was busy taking longhand notes. At the mention of Jack Broaders, he interrupted the narrative, and summoned Constable Dunne from the mess-room. The latter put on his tunic and helmet hurriedly and rushed from the barrack in the direction of the market square. Kitty protested that Jack had neither hand, act

nor part in the affair. But the sergeant should have his way.

"I have my eye on Jack Broaders this long time," he said, evidently impatient also to lay hands on him.

"And now, Mrs. Mackey," he continued confidentially, "let me examine the foreign money. Most probably it is German, as you say."

Kitty searched her pockets; but the more she searched the more excited she became.

"God help me, anyway!" she exclaimed. "Didn't I leave them in the basket after me, rolled up in a handkerchief for safety?"

"Are you quite sure?" asked Sergeant Mulligan.

"As sure as my name is Kitty Mackey," was the emphatic reply.

"Don't worry, then," he added consolingly, "I shall send Constable Dunne for the basket when he returns."

"You're the lavin's of kindness, Sergeant," said Kitty. "Tell him, too, to fetch over Jamesie and the ass and car, for my nerves have got the better of my poor limbs."

"Leave the whole matter in my hands, Mrs. Mackey," he replied. And he paced up and down the hall, staring pensively at the floor, his brows knit by very dint of intense thought.

They had not long to wait. Constable Dunne arrived, accompanied by Jack Broaders; and all retired immediately to the day room on the left. After handing over his charge to the Sergeant, Constable Dunne was despatched in search of the basket.

"Be the powers o' war, is this where you are, too, Kitty?" cried Jack, on recognising the face peeping out through a narrow slit in the grey shawl.

"You're welcome," she returned quite civilly. Despite all her trouble, she appreciated the humour of the situation. It was no great harm to get Jack's head in a halter.

"Silence!" exclaimed the Sergeant. "Any statement made here will be used as evidence."

But Jack could not restrain his tongue. He was convinced that Kitty had sworn information against him.

"Yourself and your handful of miserable chickens," he hissed across the room, "why I wouldn't have looked at them at all only I knew you wanted the few ha'pence."

"I cannot allow such abusive language. Come, Broaders, this way." And Sergeant Mulligan, taking Jack by the shoulder, escorted him downstairs to the lock-up. Mrs. Mackey heard the bang of the door and the rattling of keys.

It was a considerable time before Constable Dunne arrived with Jamesie and the ass and car. They were followed by a motley crowd of ragamuffins, who booed and cheered



"Be the powers o' war, is this where you are, too, Kitty?"

alternately, thinking, no doubt, that the officious constable had arrested the youngster on some flimsy pretext. Sergeant Mulligan heard the uproar as they approached, and, drawing his baton, ran to the rescue. The disturbance ceased almost instantaneously. Constable Dunne was left in charge of the ass and car. Jamesie kept a tight grip of the basket, and in fear and trembling followed the Sergeant up the great stone steps leading to the barrack.

Kitty opened the basket eagerly, and untied the handkerchief. The crispy, red-lettered notes were there, just as she left them.

"Let me see," said the Sergeant, almost snatching them from her hand.

"Confound you!" he yelled.

"God bless us!" ejaculated Kitty, and she edged towards the door.

"Stupid woman! These are some of the notes issued quite recently by the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury under authority of Act of Parliament. And you are liable to be imprisoned for daring to refuse them as legal tender."

"Oh, Sergeant, dear, don't say that. Let me off for this time, and I'll do the best I can with them. What came over the Town's Commissioners to go making paper money? They must be mighty hard up entirely."

Enraged as he was, Sergeant Mulligan found it difficult not to smile. However, he succeeded. "Go about your business, Mrs. Mackey, and try to keep a civil tongue in your cheek. That's my advice to you."

"I'm for ever obliged to you, Sergeant," returned Kitty as she took Jamesie by the hand and proceeded to the ass and car. Constable Dunne helped her to her seat. "Long life to you both!" was her parting wish.

At six o'clock that evening Jack Broaders was let off without a stain on his character. Luckily Mrs. Mackey was half way home by that time.

MISS HELENA LE POER

MOGUE POWER was reckoned an honest man and a good neighbour by rich and poor in the parish of Coolduff. He held a tidy farm of some forty acres in the townland of Clogheen. Those who remembered the Land League and all he suffered in the cause were more than surprised to see how quickly Mogue Power had recovered himself and gone ahead again in the world. But he was a hard worker and had a good head. There was nothing a mystery to him in the way of cattle and horses. He could value a beast better than the ablest dealer in town, and so sign they gave him a hard name. If he saw he could turn an honest pound or two he sometimes bought and sold again at the same fair, or did a little hobbing, as they say. People noticed the land improving and the out-offices extending year by year. But when Mogue Power started to build a grand new dwelling-house nobody knew what to think or say. A two-storey, slate-roofed mansion no less, with bay-windows downstairs and a porch in front of the hall-door. Some said he had fallen in for American money. Others concluded that he was trading on the bank. It was no such thing. While the gossips were backbiting on the Cross of Coolduff, Mogue Power was studying market prices in the newspaper, or making a bargain perhaps ten miles away. That's how he was able to pay cash down for every stick and stone in the new building. Marriage was the driving power and the secret of all his ambition. He was convinced that if he had a handsome, comfortable house he would not be long without a highly respectable wife, plain-looking and uncouth though he himself was. Nor was he mistaken. The walls were scarcely dry when Mogue Power had a partner to paper them in the latest style.

Mary Kinsella was her maiden name, and she came all the ways from the mountains to end her days in Coolduff within sight of the salt water. She could not claim to be

prepossessing in appearance no more than Mogue, but she had a most pleasing manner and was convent educated. For a time Mogue was afraid she had too many "airs" about her for a plain farmer's wife. She explained that they were indispensable in order to maintain her social superiority in a place like Coolduff. In the matter of dress and such like, Mrs. Power displayed much taste, and could easily be singled out among her neighbours at Mass on the women's side of the chapel every Sunday morning. She also did her best to improve the cut of Mogue's clothes, and even went so far as to buy him a new-fashioned head-gear, but he proved incorrigible. Indeed, she never remembered him to have so flatly and fiercely rejected her advice; and had she persisted he would most certainly have lost his temper. In all other domestic affairs, however, Mogue gave his wife a free hand. And so well he might, for she proved to be a first-class house-keeper. To be sure she had brought a wad of money into Clogheen that more than compensated Mogue for the building of the house. But what of that, if she had not been economic and industrious?

The pity was, neither of the children took after the mother. Tom, the elder of the two, was the image of Mogue in appearance and manner, a short, thick-set, plump-faced lad, with dark grey eyes that flashed defiance, and lips close-fitted as a purse, yet emotional withal and outspoken. When only in the Third Book at the National School on the Cross he displayed a precocious interest in the story of Ireland. He was proud of the part his father had taken in the land war, and could point out the marks of the battering-ram in the gable-end of the old dwelling-house, which, by the way, was still used as a "lodge" for the servant boys. Tom's ultra-national proclivities caused his mother much uneasiness. She knew several young fellows up her own side that went to the bad by mixing in politics. In her opinion it was a mistake for Mogue to be putting wild notions in the lad's head by telling constantly stories of evictions, and lilting snatches of Land League songs. In fact, her chief motive in sending Tom to college for two years was to banish these democratic ideas, and make him more of a gentleman. Strangely enough, the remedy failed completely in Tom's case. Possibly he would have been cured had he undergone

the full course of Intermediate treatment, but it was too tedious and expensive for Mogue Power's pocket. Moreover, the boy was needed at home, and if he took to learning Latin and Greek he would never settle down on the land, or, at best, would only go mouching about the farm with his hands in his pockets. Mrs. Power might have a pardonable dislike for certain types of rural politicians, but Mogue had an unholy contempt for squireens and snobs of every species. So when Tom came home from college for good there were conflicting opinions in Clogheen on the value of education. His mother expected more urbanity and culture in return for so much money, and she criticised the college authorities rather severely for their neglect in that respect. Mogue, on the contrary, was quite satisfied with the result, and often thanked God that the boy was not spoilt.

Nellie Power was Tom's junior by a year and ten months, and when the latter had completed his studies, she was sent to St. Attracta's Boarding School for Young Ladies, where—the advertisement ran—"a high-class English education is given, and conversational French forms an important part of the curriculum." In her letter to Mother Superior, Mrs. Power expressed the sincere hope that she would see a great improvement in Nellie's gait and tone after her first term at the convent. And her last word to her daughter as they parted with a fond embrace at the railway station, was to learn how to speak and act in polite society, for otherwise, as happened in Tom's case, money would be only thrown away on her.

After a few weeks at St. Attracta's, Nellie discovered that her name was a great drawback. It betrayed the social status of her family. Her companions guessed that she came of the farming class, and they treated her accordingly; not that they were rude towards her, but they showed no great desire to cultivate her friendship. Others with prettier pet names and more aristocratic patronymics were preferred before her. Nellie felt the position very keenly. Pacing the lawn one day with Marie Leroy, one of the clever Intermediate day pupils, who had been always very patronising and confidential, Nellie overcame her bashfulness and explained the many disadvantages under which she laboured by reason of her plebeian name and surname. Marie smiled in sympathy, for she had had a similar experience. The

coincidence was so touching she could not help taking Nellie into her confidence. Marie Leroy was no other than plain Mary Leary in disguise. The transposition of a few letters had worked wonders for her in society. Marie Leroy enjoyed the friendship of many who would have never known Mary Leary. She had no hesitation in recommending Nellie to go and do likewise. It was quite simple. Helena Le Poer would read and sound much better than Nellie Power. And as for the address, Clogheen, it could be immensely improved by adding a monosyllable. She suggested several, "House," "Ville," "View," "Heath," "Lodge," etc. Nellie selected "Clogheen Ville" by preference. She decided, however, for many reasons, not to make any change until the coming holidays. It would be necessary to give instructions to Mrs. McGrath, the postmistress at Coolduff, who was getting old and stupid and might not be able to locate Clogheen Ville. Besides, her school companions would make fun of her if she adopted the reformed name during the current session. She could write to several of them in the vacation and make them familiar with the signature Helena Le Poer, so that on their return they would know how to address her. Meantime, by way of preparation, she could have some private cards printed and notepaper stamped according to the revised version. Marie Leroy very kindly promised to order them next day on her way to town. They became fast friends as a result of their confidential chat on the lawn that morning. Nellie came to speak familiarly and affectionately of the Leroy, more especially Alf Leroy, C.E., Marie's eldest brother, as if she had been acquainted with them for years. They resided at "Bellevue Cottage, Castlereagh Avenue." She promised to call there the day school broke up. The train going South would not be leaving until three o'clock in the afternoon.

About five weeks afterwards, Nellie turned rather reluctantly down a narrow avenue on the outskirts of the city, noting the names on the gate-piers that fronted a long row of red-brick, stereotyped, unpretentious private dwellings, till at last she recognised with a certain feeling of disappointment the much-talked-of Bellevue Cottage. Before she had undone the latch on the little green iron gate Marie appeared at the hall-door and cheerily greeted her.

"I am delighted you arrived so early. Alf was just thinking of starting for his offices in Sackville Street."

"How fortunate!" exclaimed Nellie, trying to appear overjoyed, whereas she was very dubious about the pleasure in store. After all, the Leroys were only middle-class people like herself. Neither within nor without was Bellevue Cottage up to Nellie's preconceived ideals. She had expected to see the inside of an early eighteenth century Dublin mansion with oak-panelled rooms and massive richly-sculptured mantelpieces of which she had heard so much in the art class. There was nothing here to suggest either opulence or refinement. By Marie's direction, she placed her rain coat and umbrella on a cheap, modern, tacks-and-glue hall-stand which contained already a gentleman's dark green velvet cloth tavi-stock and light silver-handle cane. The room on the right into which Nellie was ushered could boast of a ponderous piano and a genuine antique sideboard. But the centre-table with its photo-frames and postcard albums was too neatly arranged to be homely; while six tiny chairs, each bearing an immense hand-painted or embroidered cushion, stood stiffly in their appointed places as if unwilling to make way for the visitors. One felt inclined to apologise for intruding and causing such an upset.

Marie explained that her parents had gone on their customary morning pilgrimage to ten o'clock Mass at Dominick Street. She then went to the staircase and called Alf. He must have been standing to attention at no far distance, for he appeared almost instantaneously.

"Miss Helena Le Poer, Alf."

"Why, I can scarcely believe that we have not met before, Miss Le Poer, Marie has so often spoken of you," said Alf smiling.

"Really!" replied Nellie (henceforth Helena) not well knowing what else to say.

"Yes," he continued, "I often thought your ears should have been hot. If so, Marie and I are to blame."

"Rather I should thank you," Helena retorted smartly. "The warmth of true friendship is a very pleasant feeling in a cold, conventual atmosphere. You must have been saying many kind things, for I often longed to be within hearing."

"Not a word more than you deserved, Helena," interposed Marie; "not half the nice things you said of me, I understand, to the boarders."

"Then you are quits," said Alf; and he pulled out the piano-stool, diffident no doubt about the sustaining power of the other furniture.

"Don't lean too heavily with your elbow on the piano, Alf. Why not sit over near the fire with Helena and I?"

"A revolving stool is best for a fellow who is always on the rounds," was the witty reply.

Helena laughed without an effort for the first time in Bellevue Cottage. She could not help liking Alf. At least, first impressions were very favourable. He appeared to be a gay lady's man, well accustomed to mix in drawing-room society. How unlike her brother Tom at home, who, her mother told her in a letter recently, was growing more serious every day and developing extreme views on politics. The thought occurred to Helena that if Alf could only spend a few days with Tom it would do her brother all the good in the world.

"But surely you will not leave us so quickly," Helena ventured to remark.

"Business is a pitiless master, Miss Le Poer. I am very sorry I must be off. But I hope to be back before you leave."

"And if you happen not to be?" said Helena coquettishly.

"Oh—I shall run across to Westland Row to see you off," he blurted.

"What if the train be gone?" added Marie to keep up the joke.

"Well—yes—that would be awkward. I should think I would be very much inclined to take the next train."

"For where?" said Marie teasingly, seeing that he was in a corner.

"For Clogheen Ville, Coolduff, to be sure," interrupted Helena. "You would find it not half bad, plenty shooting and coursing just this season. Tom will be delighted to meet you and be knows every inch of the ground. Do say you will come, Alf!" Without knowing it Helena, too, had gone further than she intended. She forgot for the moment

what Mogue Power might have to say on the question of visitors to Clogheen. The word was said now, and it could not be unsaid.

"You are exceedingly kind, Miss Le Poer," replied Alf. "I must admit I am passionately fond of the gun. And if I could possibly get a week-end off, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to spend a few days at Clogheen Ville. Perhaps the Fates may be propitious."

"Let us hope so," added Helena; but there was ambiguity in her tone of voice, for second thoughts were in her mind.

Alf hurried down the steps leading to the little grass plot and swung the gate after him with a bang. In the evening Marie accompanied Helena to the station and remained chatting through the carriage-window till the train began to move off. Then she did the only other thing possible—waved a white silk handkerchief. Helena did the same.

Mrs. Power's latest communique on the situation at Clogheen was quite correct. Tom had begun to take a leading part in political movements. The evening Helena arrived home she found him busy constructing a rifle range for the local corps of volunteers in a field called "the long meadow." He had been unanimously chosen captain only a few nights before. His mother tried to dissuade him from accepting the title, for she had always known physical force parties to be condemned by priests and politicians as illegal and nefarious. Every time she heard the report of the rifles in the distance, she instinctively stooped her head, and uttered some pious ejaculation. But Tom only laughed at her womanly ways. Mogue, as might be expected, highly approved of the new movement. His only regret was that his limbs were too stiff to start drilling. He had learned to handle a rifle in the sixties, and even still he was seldom far short of the mark. It was amusing to see himself and Brian Dempsey trying their hand sometimes with the new-fashioned Lee-Enfield when the boys were done drilling.

"Brian, asthore, if we only had them articles forty or fifty year ago!" Mogue used to remark, as he fixed the stock firmly against his shoulder-blade.

The first week of the vacation passed so quickly and so

pleasantly that Helena entirely forgot to write to her friend, Marie Leroy, and consequently neglected also to give the necessary instructions to Mrs. McGrath, the post-mistress, regarding the delivery of letters, etc., addressed: "Helena Le Poer, Clogheen Ville." The omission caused much confusion and excitement at the post-office.

Mrs. McGrath had but just opened the shop on Friday morning betwene eight and nine o'clock, when she was rung up on the telephone. She hurried to the instrument, her temper rising.

"What's amiss wud you so brave an' early?" she demanded loudly.

"Is that Mrs. McGrath?"

"Aye, who else do you think? You might have waited for a body to finish her breakfast."

"Sorry—it's war times, remember—I have a telegram from Dublin for you——"

"God bless us!" she exclaimed. "Don't say they're after landin'."

"No, no! Take down the following: 'Miss Helena Le Poer, Clogheen Ville. Escaped this morning, *en route*, bringing gun.—Alf Leroy.'"

"What's it all about?" inquired the elderly post-mistress, hopelessly bewildered.

"Don't ask stupid questions, Mrs. McGrath," was the impolite response.

"But who's the Miss Helena Le Poer, Clogheen Ville?"

"That's your business to find out."

"There's nobody of that name about here that I know of, and I know Coolduff for the last thirty year."

"I have no time to argue with you. Good morning!—Thank you!"

Mrs. McGrath was now face to face with a most mysterious telegram. She put on her glasses and read it again, repeating the words aloud in hope of inspiration. None came. Dick Sinnott was her quick-witted post-boy. Perhaps he could solve the riddle. She went out on the Cross just as she was, hatless and unwashed, and called Dick.

"Do *you* know any Miss Le Poer of Clogheen Ville?—you that's mixin' among the gentry so constantly?"

"Miss Le Poer!—Clogheen Ville!" Dick muttered pen-

sively. "You don't mane Mogue Power's daughter, I suppose?"

"Not at all, you cawboge!" replied the post-mistress, indignantly. "Here's the telegram and read it yourself. Now don't you see the differ?"

"I do," said he, "but that makes me nothing the wiser. It must be some of them city people that camps down about the sand hills in all kinds of weather."

"No, Dick, what I'd be thinkin', it's some lady visitor is stayin' at the rectory beyond, and this is some army man or go-boy of some sort running down to see her *a-knownst* to everybody."

"Not wan bit unlikely," assented Dick, "I can make inquiries at the gate lodge an' I passin'."

"And sure, well an' good, if you can't find anyone of the name, bring back the wire in the evening and we'll lave it so."

Dick Sinnott searched high and low from ten in the morning till three in the evening, but failed to find Miss Helena Le Poer, Clogheen Ville. Although Mrs. McGrath had assured him that it was useless to call to Mogue Power's for any information on the matter, Dick had done so. Mogue himself happened to be mending the paling by the roadside as he was going by.

"Do any of your family answer the name of Helena Le Poer?" Dick asked, half joking, half in earnest.

Mogue examined the telegram, having first taken the pipe out of his mouth, and secured it, head downwards, in his waistcoat pocket.

"I'll tell you now who that must be," said Mogue, "as sure as you're born, she's a daughter of the quare American fellow that was around here some time ago wud a shootin' gallery, and a bag of tricks."

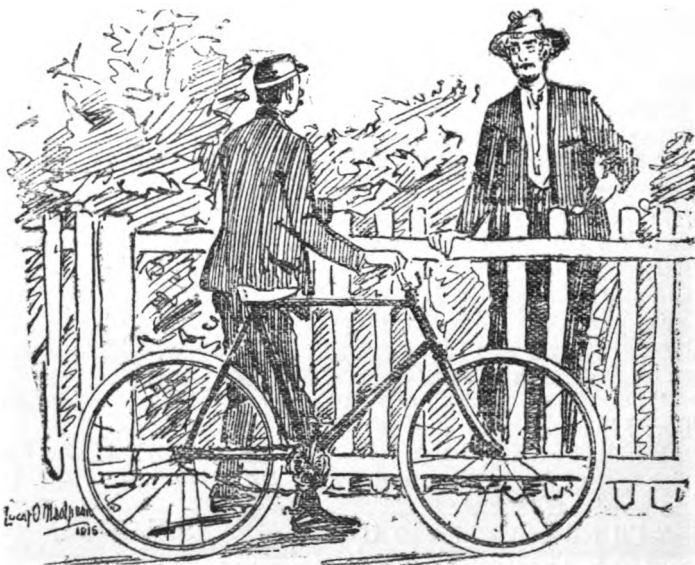
"Arrah, don't I remember who you're alludin' to," answered Dick, laughing. "Didn't he make a hare of the whole of us, includin' the priest himself? Oh, a keen shot that same Yankee! Musha, where is he at all now, I wonder?"

"I hear he was arrested since under what they call the Realm's Act."

"And maybe this is he afther escapin' under the name of Leroy," suggested Dick.

"I wouldn't put it apast him," Mogue added, thoughtfully.

"Well, whoever they are, I'm after gettin' me own share of trouble on their account, at any rate," said Dick, putting the little brown envelope back in the bag, and remounting the bike hastily. He had orders from Capt. Tom Power to attend a secret meeting of the Volunteers that night down at Rathcushlane. The boys laughed heartily when Dick told them of his meanderings in search of a sweetheart for a lado by the name of Leroy. Tom Power overheard the conversa-



"Do any of your family answer the name of Helena Le Poer?"

tion, and as usual took a serious view of the telegram incident. He hinted that, not unlikely, Leroy was some official in the secret service department sent down in connection with the recent attempt at gun-running off the Saltees. They needed to be very cautious.

The morning mail from Dublin arrived an hour late at W—— terminus owing to a landslip near Bray Head. Alf Leroy jumped to the platform before the train had quite

stopped, for he had twelve long Irish miles to drive on an outside car. There were at least ten jarveys with their vehicles backed up close to the main entrance, all making perfervid appeals for passengers, and gesticulating wildly with their whips. Alf Leroy accepted the invitation of a wizened-faced old chap in charge of a good-looking bay mare, who he afterwards learned, was known far and near as "Larry Walker."

"Where to, sir?" he asked, when Alf had secured himself on the opposite side of the rickety conveyance.

"Le Poer's, Clogheen Ville, Coolduff," replied Alf in a very superior tone.

"A weary oul' journey, and as bad a bit of road as there is between this an' Dublin. But," added Larry, "you're sittin' behind the best little mare in the county. She knows the road to the Cross of Coolduff better nor meself. I remember wan night last winter we started from here an' it snowin'——"

"I understand," interrupted Alf, "but do you know the exact position of Mr. Le Poer's residence, Clogheen Ville?"

"The name is not familiar to me, to tell you no lie, sir," admitted Larry, after some hesitation. "Of course I'm well acquainted wud Mogue Power, wan o' the dacentest farmers in the whole barony, and a tip-top man about horses. He had a two-year-old chestnut colt on the fair here, I think it was a fortnight o' last Thursday ——"

"I know," Alf again interposed, "but my friend, Le Poer, belongs to the gentry class, I am informed."

"To be sure he must. What would the likes of you be doin' visitin' an ordinary farmer's place. I suppose you're comin' to shoot on the lake."

"Exactly," said Alf, inferring not unnaturally that the lake was portion of the Le Poer demesne; "I wonder, though, you have not been at Le Poer's in your time, Larry."

"Well the way to say it is I do be so many places that I don't remember half of them. Make your mind aisy now, I'll bring you there all right. What's this again you say the name is?"

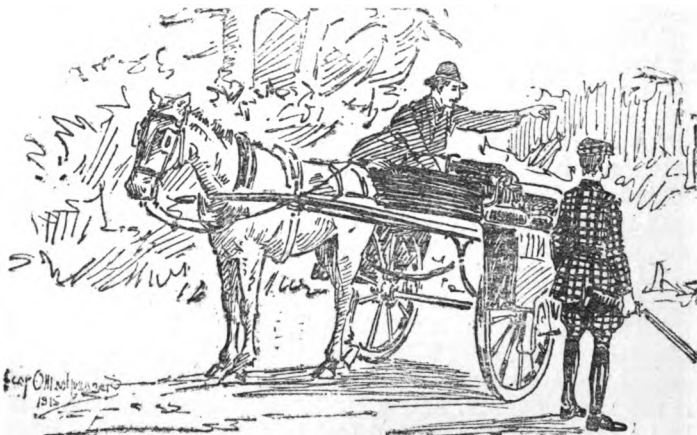
"Le Poer's," was the emphatic reply.

"Ah, don't I know now what you're drivin' at! It's wan o' the ould Norman buildin's you're wantin' to see."

"Yes," assented Alf, "I should think the Le Poer's are of

Anglo-Norman descent. But could you not drive on a little faster ? ”

The little mare had been taking things easy. Every time Larry started to talk, she almost stopped to listen. Alf, therefore, cut short the conversation, and the pace was quickened. It was getting duskish as they neared the Cross of Coolduff. Half a mile farther on Larry took a sharp turn



“ Step across the stile there, and you'll be down at the castle in no time ”

to the right and proceeded down a by-road till suddenly to Alf's utter amazement they were confronted by a tall iron gate.

“ Here we are now ! ” cried Larry. “ Step across the stile there, and you'll be down at the castle in no time. I'll stay waitin' for you, while the mare is atin' a grain of oats. You'll probably get a shot between day and dark, for the lake is full of wild geese this time of year. You'll find me above at the head of the lane.”

“ But I intend to stay here over night,” said Alf, thinking that Larry had misunderstood him.

“ Oh, plaze yerself that way. You'll have the bag full of wild fowl afore mornin', I hope.”

Alf paid him the fare, six shillings and sixpence.

" Good evenin' now, and God send you safe ! " said Larry ; and having turned up the left wing of the car, he headed for the Cross of Coolduff where himself could have something as well as the mare.

Alf kept walking on as Larry directed, hoping every moment to meet some of the Le Poers or their employees. Soon he descried what appeared to be a dismantled castle looming in the distance. At once it occurred to him that he had been tricked by his loquacious friend. But he continued his wild-goose chase. The modern residence might stand concealed beside the ancient stronghold, as sometimes happens. This green lanc might be only a short cut. The main avenue could not be far away. The gaunt, deserted castle towered above him. It was built on a mound, protected by a circular ditch and overgrown with briar and hawthorn. It seemed to say : " Thus far shalt thou go, no farther." Alf's courage failed. He would have given the world at that moment to be back safely once more on the king's highway, or better still, at home in dear old Dublin.

It was not to be. From the time he had alighted off Larry Walker's sidecar he had been tracked by armed men. Now escape was impossible. He was retracing his steps hurriedly up the gloomy laneway when suddenly two men sprang from either side and gripped him roughly. A shrill whistle was the signal for the rest of the attacking party. In a moment he was surrounded by rifles and bayonets. Alf made no resistance. He was struck speechless, and had to be held in an upright position by the two stalwarts. He could hear their comrades laughing callously behind backs. What could it all mean ? Was he mistaken for a spy ? Or was he to be murdered in cold blood ?

" What's your name ? and what's your business here ? " demanded the leader.

" My name is Leroy," answered Alf, screwing up the little courage that remained. " I am down this country on a shooting party and I have missed my way."

" Oh, boys o' man, do you hear that ? " exclaimed a voice in the crowd.

" Where do you come from ? " said the other officer.

" My home address is Bellevue Cottage, Castlereagh Avenue, Dublin."

"Now didn't I tell you he's from Dublin Castle," yelled the voice responsible for the previous interruption.

"That's right, Dick!" shouted several approvingly.

"From information received," the Captain resumed, "we have good reason to suspect that your chief business in this locality is to detect so-called felons, and to prevent the landing of arms necessary for the national defence of Ireland."

"Hear, hear! Now you're hittin' the nail on the head. What'll he say to that?" again cried a certain man called Dick.

"You are hopelessly mistaken," protested Alf, heatedly, "I am a civil engineer by profession, and I have only come on a friendly visit. I bear no ill will to man, woman or child among you."

"Name any person you know in the district," said somebody in the rear rank.

"I am a personal friend of the Le Poer family," an assertion which evoked great laughter.

"There's no such people in this parish or the next wan to it. I can swear to that," objected Dick, the insuppressible.

"You see," added the Captain politely, "you have failed to give a satisfactory account of yourself or your movements; and consequently it is my unpleasant duty to have you detained until such time as you think well of giving the information required."

"But you are acting illegally, sir," was Alf's futile threat.

"We have now power to make our own laws, you must remember," the Captain retorted sarcastically. And turning to his men, he yelled: "Fall into line! By the right! Quick march!"

Alf had no choice but to go.

On Saturday evening the following startling heading appeared in one of the Dublin papers:—

"MAROONED ON THE KEERAGH ISLANDS!

"Dublin Citizen's Strange Adventure.

"Rescued by Fethard Fishermen."

But strange to relate there was no further reference to the mysterious affair. Alf Leroy refused to give information as to how he got on the island. He decided that the less said about it the better. And all who were at Rathcushlane that historic night admired his good sense.

A COOLDUFF COUNTY COUNCILLOR

MOGUE POWER was in the worst of humour. Neither his wife nor Helena, his self-conceited daughter, could get any good of him. He was seated before the kitchen fire, with a newspaper spread out before him, in everybody's way. Mrs. Power asked him politely, more than once, to move aside just a little, for it was Saturday night and she was busy ironing a few articles. But Mogue expressed a strong desire to be let alone.

"What are we comin' to?" he muttered. Thinking the reference was to herself, Mrs. Power thought it wiser not to reply. A moment after, Mogue rolled the newspaper into a wisp, and deliberately aimed at the fire. His wife was alarmed. She had heard that certain newspapers contain most inflammable matter. Fortunately Mogue missed his shot. On second thoughts, he jumped up and snatched the paper out of the *greesach* just as a tiny spark was nibbling at an advertisement for medicinal wine. He shook off the ashes, and, folding the paper anew, placed it on the shelf over head with the gun and the powder pouch. Nobody was supposed to touch anything Mogue left in this particular spot.

"Let us say the Rosary, and be goin' to bed," he said, dropping on his knees beside the table.

Helena almost lost her temper. It was nothing short of coercion to be forced to retire at such an early hour. "Just fancy!" she exclaimed, "and it not quite nine o'clock! You will surely wait till Tom comes home from town."

"That'll do, now," answered her father gruffly. "You'll have a different story in the mornin' when you're called for first Mass. Myself do be often wonderin' how Father Corish has patience with the two of you strolling up the chapel every Sunday while the poor man is strivin' to read out the Acts."

"I beg your pardon," his wife interposed; "we are not late half as often as the Rigeys beyond, and they have a

croydon to carry them, not like us, trudging through fields and climbing stiles."

The mention of the Rigley family made bad worse. "See here, now," exclaimed Mogue very determinedly, "don't aggravate me, an' I on my knees. The Rigeys, how are you! A nice pattern, indeed, for the parish!"

Lest he might be tempted to say more in this connection than his prayers, his wife started the Rosary without further delay. Each said a decade in turn. Peg Hawton, the old servant girl, recited hers with special devotion away in a dark corner. But Larry Molloy put on such a spurt at the fifth mystery that Mogue had to call him to order: "Will you go aisy, man alive!" said he. The gorsoon's voice dropped an octave; and it was all he could do to finish his decade, so ashamed was he. Mrs. Power had a number of special prayers to add in conclusion. "Trimmins" was the name Peg Hawton gave them. Then all remained a while in silence. Mogue was the last to struggle up on his feet. Larry Molloy had slipped out quietly and made his way to "the lodge."

They had not long to wait for Tom's arrival. The jolting of the two dray carts down the narrow, crooked lane leading from the main road could be heard half a mile away. They were heavily laden with yellow meal and coal for the winter. Mogue lit the lantern and met them at the bawn gate. He had a suspicion that Mick Doyle, "the man"—as distinct from Larry, "the boy"—might have taken a drop too much in town. But he was agreeably disappointed. No time was lost in unyoking. The coal was left untrapped in the haggard. Mick made four journeys to the barn with a bag on his back; and having secured the door, he shook the dust off his Sunday clothes before appearing in the kitchen. Mrs. Power had their supper ready, and a right good meal they made after their weary journey.

"Now you hurry upstairs, and have your 'things' prepared for the mornin'. You remember the hunt you had last Sunday for my ould tie, an' it in my coat pocket all the time," said Mogue, addressing his wife. "I'll stay here with Tom a start."

"Not at all, father," Tom protested, "don't mind me. I'll be goin' too, when I finish this pipe."

"Sure, the night is long; and maybe you have some news from town," added Mogue quite unconsciously.

"Listen to that, now, and he so impatient to get rid of us an hour ago," Mrs. Power grumbled. She was standing at the foot of the stairs with a candlestick in her hand and a bundle of clothes under her arm.

"Men are always like that," said Helena sharply.

"Did you hear any talk about Dan Rigley and the County Council?" inquired Mogue, when all had retired.

"No," said Tom; "I was kept going all day; and the evening was too wet to read the paper on the road home."

"Well, I did, and that's the bad humour is on me. Read that and see what you think of it," said Mogue, taking down the soiled copy from the shelf, and pointing to the editorial column.

"'We are very pleased to learn'—Is that it?"

"Yes, that's it. Read on, now."

Tom continued in a subdued tone: "We are very pleased to learn that Mr. D. J. Rigley, J.P., Ballinloch House, has consented, in deference to the urgent appeal of his numerous friends and admirers, to go forward as a candidate at the forthcoming County Council election. Mr. D. J. Rigley has been a lifelong sterling Nationalist. Unlike too many of his class, he did not hesitate to throw in his lot with the down-trodden tenantry in the dark and evil days of landlord tyranny. He has always taken a keen, intelligent interest in the work of the Agricultural Department. The success of the Coolduff Show is due chiefly to Mr. D. J. Rigley's talent for organisation. By his genial manner and level-headed advice he has promoted good-will and toleration amongst all creeds and classes in a district which, but yesterday, was seething with sectarian and political bickerings. We count on the good sense and patriotism of the electors of Coolduff division to return Mr. D. J. Rigley, J.P., at the head of the poll."

"That's really fine, if it be all true," said Tom innocently.

"Really fine!" exclaimed his father. "Why I never read such stuff outside the columns of the *Irish Times*."

"How is that, father? Is it too flattering, you think?"

"Why, the most of it is false, and the rest of it is a slur on the district. We're come to a sorry pass when we must

fall back on Dan Rigley to represent us on the County Council, or anywhere else, for that matter."

"You cannot expect a J.P. to be ultra-patriotic. But I always found him very courteous and generous. He has a stake in the country, as they say; and, what's more, has the gift of the gab."

"Talk is chape, Tom, and so is soft salder. You don't know Dan Rigley as long, or as well as I do. He's a riggler by name and nature."

"That may be, I don't know, of course. But doesn't he contribute to the various movements for the good of the country? Some don't do that much aself."

"It's only so much hush money. Money has made him popular, but, take my word for it, it can't make him a patriot. Did he subscribe to the Volunteers when you called on him?"

"Well—let me see—I believe not," Tom admitted, smiling. "He assured us that the movement had his whole-hearted sympathy, but that he could not compromise himself by subscribing, as the importation of arms had been declared an offence against the Crown."

"I thought so much," said Mogue with a shake of the head. "I'll go bail he asked you to tell nobody."

"He did then, by the way. So don't let it go any farther. He might be insulted or perhaps boycotted."

"It's not the first time Dan Rigley acted the coward and traitor. Years ago, he should have been boycotted and run out of the country."

"Don't speak so loud and angry," Tom appealed. "Mother will think we are quarrelling. I had no idea that Mr. Rigley ever did our family any wrong."

"No; how could you? Neither will I tell you now," said Mogue, evidently sorry for having told so much.

"But you must," Tom protested. "Half the truth oftentimes is more injurious than the whole. This hint you have thrown out will be ever rankling in my memory."

"I can't. Don't ask me. I promised ould Father Radford not to tell living man or woman about Dan Rigley's treachery during the land agitation."

"Remember I was not born in those days, father. Besides it may not be quite so bad as my imagination is certain to picture it," was the clever retort.

"Since you put it that way, perhaps I'd better let you have the whole story. Poor Father Radford—God rest him—will forgive me, if I'm doin' wrong. But you'll promise not to divulge the secret, Tom."

"Yes, father, I pledge my word of honour."

"Well, if I'm not greatly mistaken," Mogue began, "it was about the year '87 we all signed the Plan of Campaign, and decided to pay no rent and hold our farms against bailiffs and battherin' rams. I remember the meeting below in the band-room at Rathcushlane, as if it was only last night. Nobody being eager to take the chair, I consented; and lookin' round from one to th'other I missed Dan Rigley's pinched face and side whiskers. The Secretary of the League, Mylie Whelan, I think it was—he went to America shortly after—said he had a letter from Mr. Rigley regrettin' that he couldn't attend as his wife was in poor health, but that he would abide by whatever decision we came to at the meetin'. He enclosed a pound note, earnest money, and that got him applause. Being such a big fellow in his way, they were glad to have him in the movement. So far, so good! A week or two later the whole of us got notice to quit, Dan Rigley included. Word arrived that police and soldiers were getherin' into town from all sides, and that we better be preparin'. So every man barricaded his house and place as best he could. Sixteen of the finest and stoutest boys about the parish volunteered to defend Ballinloch if Dan Rigley would only consent. But me brave Dan didn't want his fine house battered. That's why they came to me instead. Was I ever tellin' you how they sunk a pipe and brought the water into the house from the well-field on the hill?"

"Yes; you described all that to me, before," replied Tom, taking a furtive peep at his watch. The clock on the lobby had struck.

"More than likely I did, I suppose. But this is the part you never heard. The night before the bailiffs arrived I went for a word with Father Radford. When I had told him my story, he invited me inside, and as usual kept me late. For good luck or bad luck I came home round by the road, apast Major Dowdall's avenue gate. I don't know what drove me that way. Perhaps it was to see had the police arrived. At any rate, just as I was passin', didn't I hear the

latch rattlin'; and steppin' awanside under the shade of the trees, it bein' a bright, hardy night, who did I recognise comin' out, and headin' along the road afore me but the angashore, Dan Rigley? Fearin' I might be mistaken, I hurried to overtake him. But faith he stepped out, too, in fine style. So I halloed after him. With that he gave a spring across the ditch an' away, with me hot foot after him. I knew he was after betrayin' us. He tried to blink me in the sand-pit aback Mick Hogan's cottage, but knowin' the ground so well, I was too wary for him. Some hot words passed between us. Of course he made all sorts of excuses for his visit to the Major's, and flatly denied that he had paid the rent. Although I didn't believe his story, I gave him the benefit of the doubt till I'd see how things 'id go next day. If Dan Rigley wasn't disturbed, I was determined to denounce him in the Laigue. But next day my tongue was tied, and so were my hands. As I sat on the outside car between two policemen with loaded rifles, on my way to the county jail, I was bitin' my nails that I hadn't let the cat out of the bag on Dan Rigley; for one of the constables, a big, harmless cawboge with a Kerry accent, told me that they had orders not to touch stick or stake in Ballinloch. I knew then for certain what brought Dan to the Major's. And many a night I lay awake on the plank bed plannin' and plottin' how I'd have revenge on the traitor. You may guess, therefore, the surprise I got one fine day when a warder announced that Father Radford wished to see me. Somehow or other I suspected his business. He nearly shook the two hands off me. I thanked him, to be sure, for comin' such a journey, and inquired about everybody and everything in the parish. Poor man, he thought mighty hard of mentionin' Dan Rigley's name. But at last he broke the ice. 'You've heard,' said he, 'that Dan Rigley wasn't evicted.' 'I did,' says I, 'an', what's more, I know the raison why, your reverence.' 'Have patience, Mogue,' says he, 'and let me explain,' seeing my temper was up. 'You may's well be idle, Father Radford,' I made answer. 'Won't you listen to your parish priest?' says he, rather huffed. I said no more, and let him go ahead. He admitted that Dan Rigley sent him. 'You know, Mogue,' said he, 'Mrs. Rigley was in delicate health, and eviction would probably have meant

death.' 'And what about the Widow Foley an' her four soft children?' says I, for I couldn't hould my tongue. 'Well, I suppose,' says he, "blood is thicker than water." 'And death is better than dishonour, any day,' says I, as quick as that. 'L'ave it so, now, Mogue,' says he, puttin' his hand on my shoulder. 'It's all past and gone, and you'll win the fight without Dan Rigley.' 'Be me song I won't l'ave it so, your reverence,' says I; 'when I get out of here, I'll make things hot for him.' 'Don't say, you'll inform on him, and bring shame and ruin on his family,' says the old priest tremblin' from head to foot. 'I'm no informer, Father,' says I, 'but I'll let the neighbours know who sold the pass.' 'Ah, Mogue,' says he, 'remember who said we must love our enemies.' 'That's all right, Father Radford,' says I, 'but we must love our friends, too, and not allow them to be sold and betrayed by rascals like Dan Rigley.' 'For my sake, for your soul's sake, for God's sake, Mogue,' says he, taking off his silk hat, and raising his eyes towards the little blue patch of heaven shining through the barred window, 'promise me not to give information against the Rigeleys.' Faith, to tell you no lie, I was afraid to refuse the priest, he was that excited and troubled. It was hard to say the word, but what could I do? 'Let it be so, your reverence,' says I, 'I'll keep the secret of Dan Rigley, the traitor, were it to burn the heart in me.' So I did these last thirty years; and God forgive me this night for tellin' you!"

"Don't worry, Father," Tom remarked, "the secret is safe in my keeping."

"When I had done my six months," Mogue resumed, "and returned to Coolduff once more, here, I found Dan Rigley as snug as a thrush and his wife as gay as a lark. They went out of their way to cultivate my friendship, but I kept them at arm's length and tried to be civil, for all that. It was no easy job. The talk of the people used to thwart me. Very soon Mogue Power and all his land laiguing was forgotten. They had Mr. Rigley here and there an' everywhere. He was at the head an' tail of Home Rule meetin's and farmer's associations and horse shows and ould age pensions, and the divil knows what. The moment he appeared twas, 'make way for Mr. Rigley!' 'Let [Mr. Rigley spake!'] And he was never let home without a vote

of thanks. Sure the wonder is they didn't make him an M.P. long ago. But I suppose a Nationalist J.P. is nearly as good. What am I sayin'? Don't you know it all better nor meself?"

"I know too much about him," said Tom. "No wonder you lost patience reading this latest eulogium on Mr. D. J. Rigley, J.P., the life-long sterling Nationalist. If I had only known all this long ago! It is too late now. Nothing can be done, I fear."

"It is not too late!" Mogue declared with fierce emphasis. "Take off your coat, man, and fight him. You're well able to do it."

"Contest the County Council election, do you mean?" Tom asked in surprise.

"Yes," said Mogue, "worse than fail you can't. Something must be done to make the people examine their conscience."

"Nonsense, father! I'm too young and without influence. Dan Rigley has the press and the league at his back. They would call me a factionist."

"Factionist!" exclaimed Mogue sneeringly. "Wasn't Parnell a factionist in Butt's day? Wasn't Davitt a factionist when he started the Land Laigue? Unless somebody becomes a factionist the whole country will be soon in the hands of backsliders an' fair-weather patriots like Rigley."

"I'll think over it," said Tom, as he lowered the wick in the lamp. Mogue raked out the fire. It was Sunday morning.

Having consulted some of his comrades in the chapel yard next day, Tom Power decided to take his chance. They admired his pluck and promised to support him. However, the young Gaels of Coolduff had very few votes. All they could give was their influence. They created talk. And talk creates public opinion. Mogue made it his business to accompany Johnny Gorman and Dick Sinnott on the way home from Mass. They were two 'out-an'-outers' who had fought side by side with him through the Agitation, and had eaten off the same deal table in the county jail. Johnny said it was nearly time to put Dan Rigley in his own place. and agreed to canvass every house in the townland of Ballybawn that same evening. On his rounds with the post Dick Sinnott lost no opportunity of putting in a good word for

Mogue's son. Before night, the news had spread far and near. After twenty years of political repose Coolduff woke up in a panic.

Mrs. Power and Helena were among the last to hear of Tom's candidature. One was terrified; the other heart-broken. Unknown to her father, Helena had been in the habit of visiting the Rigeys of Ballinloch. She had come to like Master Harry, the youngest of the Rigley family, a rollicking squireen about her own age, and she fancied that Harry liked her. She might be mistaken, and she might not. Wait and see was the best policy. Harry's parents always made much of her. But the Misses Rigley were rather prim and condescending. They observed benevolent neutrality. Had they the least suspicion that these casual visits might lead to a matrimonial alliance between the heir of Ballinloch House and a small farmer's daughter, hostilities would be declared without a moment's warning. On no account was Helena to be asked, when visitors were expected at Ballinloch. She was not known in Society. It would be little short of an insult, for instance, to introduce Mogue Power's daughter to their friend Lieutenant Rotterson. The safest course was to leave her at home on such occasions. Unless she were hopelessly unconscious of her social inferiority she should not feel snubbed. Luckily indeed she did appear to understand the situation, and to be satisfied with a moderate share of recognition. That being so, they were more at ease and could afford to treat her more graciously when she chanced to call at Ballinloch. Helena played her part extremely well. And no wonder! Harry had told her how. Furthermore, he had assured her that, if he had his way, there would be no social party at Ballinloch without her.

Now, negotiations were broken off. No matter who won the election, Ballinloch was lost. If she could persuade her brother to withdraw even at the last moment in favour of Mr. Rigley, perhaps it might effect a reconciliation between the two families. At least so Harry said. He advised her to see Father Corish about the matter before it was too late, and he expressed the hope that she might succeed. Otherwise —

Poor Helena! It was a forlorn hope. Instead of sympathising with her, Tom delivered a bitter harangue on

snobs and shoneens and slaves and sycophants. She had made herself a laughing stock, he said, by running after the Ripleys. When he had done, Helena was in tears; but he would not relent. The day after this painful incident, Helena interviewed Father Corish in the vestry. He listened attentively as she explained how her life's prospects had been blighted by Tom's ill-advised and selfish action in opposing Mr. Rigley; how sorely she would miss the pleasant evenings at Ballinloch; how indignant the people were with her brother; how the excitement and worry of it all had upset her mother's nerves and would help to shorten her days.

"I am really sorry for you, Helena," said Father Corish placidly. "But I cannot see my way to interfere. Without wishing to cast any aspersion on Mr. Rigley or his family, all of whom are excellent Catholics, I may say that personally I would prefer to see your brother Tom as our representative on the County Council. His views on politics may be somewhat extreme, but he *has* views and fixed principles at any rate. He is honest and fearless. You remember how loyally and bravely he stood by me during the crusade against treating and drink at threshings. Only for him your own father, I fear, would have shown the white feather, and supplied the porter. It would be very ungrateful and dishonest, therefore, on my part, if I tried to dissuade him from entering public life. Between you and me, Helena, we want men of his calibre on our boards and councils."

"But, Father," objected Helena, "you seem to ignore my interests altogether. Can he not postpone his entrance into public life until his sister is settled? Then he may do as he pleases."

"The justice of his action must be decided on the old theological principle of placing a cause from which two effects follow, one good and the other evil, the former ——"

"I don't understand theology," Helena interposed; "but I consider it very unfair of Tom to go between me and Harry Rigley. I might as well speak out my mind."

"Neither has Master Harry nor his father any right to prevent your brother from serving his country according to his lights."

"You, too, must be a Sinn Feiner," she remarked snappishly,

"Perhaps so," replied Father Corish smiling; "but I cannot recall the initiation ceremony."

"At least you speak like one," she said.

"Now, Helena, dear, you are taking this affair too much to heart. It will all blow over in a few weeks. If Harry's friendship is deep-rooted it will weather the storm, and bloom again with the spring."

Helena was displeased and disappointed. A reluctant shake-hands and supercilious "good-day!" brought the interview to a close.

All the while, Tom and his supporters were canvassing the electorate night and day. They were late in the field, and had to work at high pressure. The odds were entirely against him. The local press attacked him fiercely, week after week. One short quotation will be sufficient. The column was headed:—

"FACTIONISM IN COOLDUFF

"Great indignation has been aroused throughout the electoral division of Coolduff by the action of a certain clique in putting forward a young man named Power to oppose Mr. D. J. Rigley, J.P., Ballinloch House, at the coming County Council election. There is no need to repeat what we have already written in support of Mr. D.J. Rigley. But who is this Tom Power? What has he ever done for the Nationalists of Coolduff? Where was he during the past thirty years, when Mr. Rigley and the Old Guard were fighting for the soil of Ireland? Nobody seems to know. His few disreputable supporters, we understand, realise already that their candidate will be defeated ignominiously. Why, then, not withdraw, and allow Mr. Rigley to be returned unopposed. But no; their only object is to create strife and to impose unnecessary expense on the electors, etc., etc."

Tom was inclined to send a reply, but Father Corish advised him not to be so foolish. No one, he said, believes the papers nowadays. There was a passing reference to the article in Tom Power's election address posted on the chapel gate: "The question has been asked: 'Who is this Tom Power?' I am proud to be the son of Mogue Power, the defender of the Fort of Coolduff. May I ask, where was Mr. D. J. Rigley, J.P., that historic day? Let him answer if he dare."

No more queries appeared in the local press. Interest was

revived in the history of the Fort of Coolduff; and a cloud of suspicion rested on Ballinloch. Among the small farmers especially, the trend of public opinion was in favour of Mogue Power's son. Immediately, the Rigley party changed their tactics, and centred all their attention on the labourers. Tom Power also counted on their support. He had always advocated the building of cottages, and the division of the grass lands into small holdings. The fact that Dan Rigley held three large out-farms in addition to Ballinloch should be sufficient to deprive him of the labour vote. It was not, as Tom soon discovered, to his utter dismay and disgust.

Paddy Stanton, the leader or, if not, the loudest talker, of the Farm Labour League was secured by Dan Rigley, *in the usual way*. A shabby scrap of paper written in pencil, and fixed to the pump on Coolduff Cross announced that a monster meeting of the labourers would be held there on Saturday night in support of Mr. D. J. Rigley. Being eager to hear what they had to say, Tom arranged with his friend Mrs. McGrath, the post-mistress, to have the parlour window upstairs taken out completely, and a chair ready for him just behind the curtains. He slipped over quietly between day and dark.

The attendance was rather small, but every man present did his own share of the shouting, and some a little more. Paddy Stanton was the only speaker. He spoke very excitedly and at great length, so long, indeed, that several of the audience dropped into Casey's public house during the address, and were back again in plenty time for the peroration. Here was the drift of it :—

“Wan word more an' I'm done. If this Tom Power an' his contrairy oul' father could do it, they'd take the bit as well as the sup out of the poor workin' man's mouth. Do you hear me now? Who tried to put down the good oul' custom of having a barrel or a half-barrel, as the case might be, in the middle of the haggard where every poor labourin' man could go and get a swig as often as he wanted id? It's aisy for lazy farmers' sons like Tom Power to lay down laws for other people. Listen here now, I know what I'm talkin' about. If they had to open sheaves the run of the day, and stand on the thresher in dust and danger from six in the morn till six in th'even or if they tried their hand at the

double stroke pitching straw thirty feet high, they'd have no objection to somethin' stronger than cowl'd spring water and craimery butter-milk (*vociferous cheering*). I worked at threshins and made hay-ricks before Tom Power was born; an', as I said before, I know what I'm talkin' about. Many and many's the time the parspiration rowled off me like rain off a duck's back (*laughter*). Stand be Mr. Rigley, then, every wan of you. He's the man'll give you lashins and laivans the next time you're in his haggard. Come to the election in your thousands, and let Power and his gang of factionists see that they can't ride rough shod over the labourers of Coolduff. That's all I have to say to you. But before we separate let us have a verse or two of 'God Save Ireland.'"

And they had; or, to be accurate, they sang the chorus—which was all they knew of it—three times over. As they were about to disperse, Master Harry Rigley stepped up on the trough of the pump, and said:

"I rise to congratulate your worthy leader, Mr. Patrick Stanton, on the very able, patriotic and inspiring address he has just delivered, and to thank him for the many kind and flattering things he has said of my father. I am very glad indeed that my father and I shall have an opportunity during the coming week of proving, not by words, but by deeds, our gratitude to the labourers of Coolduff for their loyalty towards us in this contest with the hydra-headed monster, factionism. It so happens that my father, in view of a rise in prices, kept over a large supply of oats in stack this year. We expect the engine in the haggard on Thursday next, and I here and now invite you all to come lend a hand and honour us by partaking of our hospitality"—(*Prolonged cheering*).

Tom Power remained sitting alone in the dark little parlour over the post-office long after the meeting had concluded. He felt dazed and sickly. Wild, angry thoughts flashed through his mind. What a blessing, if one could switch off the brain and cease to think! He tried but he could not. The things he had seen and heard on the Cross of Coolduff that night were so shameful and so sordid that he pitied the dead who died for Ireland. Only a few weeks before, these same labourers had chosen him commander of their Volunteer Corps. He was their hero; and they were

his hope and pride. He taught them to stand erect like freemen, to step together, to march steadily shoulder to shoulder on the way to Liberty. Now he was a scape-goat to be hounded down by place-hunters of the Rigley type and a pack of hirelings. They had swallowed their principles with a pint of porter. He had helped to drag them from the rut of slavery, but they staggered back, still singing the old refrain, "Oh, what matter when for Erin dear we fall."—Have sense, Tom Power! have sense! Don't be a fool like your father before you!

"Is it asleep you are, Tom?" asked Mrs. McGrath, putting in her head at the door.

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I heard you talkin' to yourself, and I was afraid the meetin' was after givin' you a nightmare."

"Would you be surprised if it had, Mrs. McGrath?"

"Not in the laist, Tom; for myself was moidhered listenin' to that drunken Paddy Stanton. Did you ever hear the likes of the talk he got on wud?"

"And what about Master Harry himself?"

"That's true for you. He should know better. But sure it's not mindin' wan or th'other of them you'd be? The boys didn't believe a word they said."

"I wonder, what *do* they believe?" said Tom in sarcasm.

"Don't be too hard on them," she pleaded; "they'd shout just as loud for you the next minit."

"I don't want them to shout. I want them to think."

"So they will, and think twice, when Father Corish comes to hear it all," she replied, as she groped down the narrow stairway before him.

There were several customers in the shop, but Tom did not stop to speak. He crossed the road, and took the mass-path which brought him by the priest's house. It being Saturday night, he was certain to find Father Corish at home.

"Take the big chair, Tom," said the priest cheerily, "you look pale and fagged."

"No thank you, Father, I feel too small a boy for it to-night."

"Don't say old Paddy Stanton has given you a knock-out blow. Sit down for a few minutes at least, and tell me all about the meeting."

Tom consented. He had not proceeded very far, when Father Corish interrupted with the exclamation :—

“What! denounced you for supporting the crusade against drink at threshings? Merciful goodness! And he himself was the very first of the labourers to sign his name to the agreement. But, pardon me, you were going to speak about Harry Rigley.”

“Yes,” Tom resumed, “he invited all hands to the threshing at Ballinloch next Thursday, and promised that they would want for nothing. So where’s the use of trying to fight against such mean methods? I have a strong notion to pitch up the contest, and let them have their way.”

“Do nothing of the kind, Tom. Stick to your guns. Unless every spark of honour and honesty is extinguished, the people will see through this disgusting game. Take my word, some bad end will come of it. What a pity I cannot speak out! If I did, I, too, would be accused of partisanship and factionism. But you go ahead, You have my blessing. I shall do what I can for you, quietly. There will be a Requiem Office here on Monday for poor Mrs. Tracy of Kiltramon, and I shall explain the situation to the clergy of the district. Dan Rigley is not a County Councillor yet.”

Tom Power went home content. Win or lose, he would stand his ground and contest every vote in the parish. The following week he continued the canvass with renewed energy. But the result was by no means reassuring. His own friends and relations, and the Powers were a long-tail family, gave him every encouragement. Outside of these, however, he met with a good deal of hedging and heckling. Rigley’s coup had captured the labour vote. Several of the farmer’s boys told Tom straight to his face that they would stand by the man who stood up for their rights.

To their credit be it said, Larry Molloy and Mick Doyle remained loyal to their old master, Mogue Power. They refused the invitation to Rigley’s spree on Thursday night; although Tom Power said he would think nothing the worse of them if they cared to go, provided both came back sober.

“No,” said Mick, “we have some other business on hands that night. When I joined the Farm Labour Laigue it wasn’t to get chape porthers.”

The big night at Rigley’s will be long remembered in

Coolduff. It is estimated that fifty hands, men and boys, all as they were, sat down in batches to supper. Mrs. Rigley presided with much grace and dignity at the head of the table. Her two aristocratic daughters surprised everybody, so assiduous were they, and so pleasant. Harry and his father did the talking. Not a phase of the election was left undiscussed.

After supper all retired to the barn, which was specially cleared out and cleaned up for the occasion. The elder Miss Rigley opened the performance with a violin selection; but she was obliged to cut it short. The place became suffocating with the commonest form of tobacco smoke. She withdrew, and did not re-appear. As many as were able then started a dance. About daybreak all made for home, as best they could. Mrs. McGrath testified that she heard shouting and singing on the Cross that morning about four o'clock.

A few hours later, Coolduff was encompassed with an army of police. What their business was nobody could tell. The wildest and weirdest rumours spread abroad. District Inspector Tumbleton was observed mouching through Major Dowdall's demesne, for all the world like a man picking mushrooms. It transpired, later on, that he was searching for footprints. Sergeant Gaffney and a party of twenty constables headed off towards the sea, and never halted till they reached Ballynale Strand, a good five mile route march. Not a sinner was there, but thirty of the finest bullocks you ever laid an eye on. Apparently the poor beasts were not in the habit of spending a day at the sea, for they went careering in wild delight all over the strand. The arrival of Sergeant Gaffney and his men spoiled the fun. Had they known the object of this police raid they could have easily evaded capture. As it was, they walked straight into the trap, and were taken in custody back to Major Dowdall. Their bellowing attracted a considerable crowd on the Cross of Coolduff. The mystery was solved. There had been a cattle-drive.

When the bullocks were secured once more in the ten acre field in front of the Big House, Mr. Tumbleton, D.I., called the Sergeant aside for consultation, and submitted facsimile impressions of the various footprints or brogue-prints he had

discovered in his meanderings through the land. Sergeant Gaffney scrutinised them with the eye of an expert. There would be considerable difficulty in tracing the owners of half-a-dozen different size brogues. Only one man in the district could do it. And that man was Paddy Stanton, the shoe-maker. So up they went, accompanied by the main body of the constabulary, the crowd of curious onlookers following at a safe distance in the rear. Paddy met them at the doorstep, and questioned their right to enter his workshop and examine his lasts and book of measurements without a warrant. One word borrowed another. Then, to the amazement and consternation of the civilians present, Sergeant Gaffney sounded a shrill whistle. In response to the call, four constables rushed the door, and, seizing the helpless shoemaker by the shoulder, placed him under arrest. The entire plant—barring the anvil—was commandeered and divided like so much booty among the rank and file. At the word of command all, Paddy Stanton included, marched off to the nearest justice of the peace, Mr. D. J. Rigley, Ballinloch. He had no option but to commit the prisoner. Bail was offered, but the D.I. objected.

Now Tom Power's turn came. Speaking at the indignation meeting held that night, he condemned the high-handed action of the police authorities. It was not for him, he said, to criticise the part taken in the disgraceful affair by his opponent, Mr. D. J. Rigley, J.P. The less said about it the better. He would leave the verdict in the hands of the voters of Coolduff. And so well he might. Their only regret was that each man had not two votes to give Tom Power. The very mention of Dan Rigley's name enraged the labourers. To their minds, his betrayal of Paddy Stanton was unrivalled in the darkest pages of the world's history.

Contrary to the predictions of the local press, the election was conducted in the best of good humour. Notwithstanding the severe set-back they had got, the Rigley party left nothing undone to avert defeat. As the voters passed into the school-house Harry Rigley assured them that, owing to his father's influence and interference, Paddy Stanton was about to be released in a few days. Lieutenant Rotterson was there, too, with his motor car, ready to convey voters to and from the polling booth. But very few accepted Harry's excuses

or the Lieutenant's services. The game was up, as Father Corish foretold.

Mick Doyle and Larry Molloy were in charge of two spring vehicles for the use of infirm voters, or indeed for the convenience of any supporter who cared to take a lift. The pace was slow, it must be admitted; but the seating accommodation left nothing to be desired. As many as ten fitted on Mogue Power's own side-car, four on either wing, one behind on the well, and the driver on the dickey. It lurched heavily to larboard and starboard alternately; but the passengers lashed themselves together and reached their destination none the worse of their adventure, save somewhat bruised and perhaps a bit dazed.

The next day Mrs. McGrath's little shop was besieged, and for safety she had to leave the shutters on the window. Big Johnny Gorman sat on the counter to be the first to get word of the poll. Every minute seemed a month to the crowd outside. At last the telephone rang up loud and long. So overcome with excitement was Mrs. McGrath, that her hand shook nervously as she took down the message. Johnny Gorman snatched it, and pushing his way to the door, let a mighty shout:—

"Three cheers for Tom Power, boys!" he cried out triumphantly. Not satisfied at that, several threw their hats in the air, and tried to jump after them.

"Let me read the figures," said Johnny, with a wave of his hand. "Tom Power, 1,798; Dan Rigley, 241."—(*Renewed cheering*)

The Coolduff Fife and Drum Band came out later on in the evening, and played up and down the Cross six times. Half the parish was in Mogue Power's that night, and the fun they had is talked of still.

THE "EASTER DUES"

THERE was utter consternation in Crow lane when word went round that Father Mat was collecting the "Easter dues." Notice had been given in the parish church the previous Sunday. But the inhabitants of Crow lane had not heard it; for they usually patronised the little Friary Chapel round the corner, where they could slip in to first Mass with nothing on them but a bit of a shawl. Father Mat's half-yearly visit was quite an event, and for days before his arrival a sort of spring-cleaning went on in the lane. He was very "particular," and although he did not expect to find any "dues," he would be very displeased to find dirty faces and untidy kitchens.

"He's come like a thunderbolt on us, and we not expectin' him," said the Widow Whelan, as she whisked the ashes under the grate, and tried to give a general tidying to the house. "The children are not in school, either—oh, of all the days in the year he should happen to come."

She had just succeeded in making the house look someway decent, and had locked the two urchins in the back-yard, when a knock came to the door, and a familiar voice called out: "Good morning, Mrs. Whelan. How are you all getting on here?"

"Musha, middlin' enough, yer reverence. Won't you stand inside for a minute?" she replied, giving a wipe of her apron to the only four-legged chair which she had in the house.

"Don't mind, Mrs. Whelan; I cannot delay," said Father Mat, seeing that he had come somewhat unexpectedly. "But," he added, "I am glad to see the little house fairly clean and comfortable."

"I does my best, Father," the widow answered; "but, to tell the truth, it's not easy, for I miss poor Bill—the light of heaven to him this day!—he was the best man that ever trod in shoe-leather."

"He was a harmless soul, God rest him," assented the kind-hearted priest.

"Harmless!" she exclaimed; "we were married ten year last March, and during that time he never once raised a hand to me. I could say and do as I liked."

"I don't doubt it for a moment," was Father Mat's equivocal reply; and instinctively he rubbed his eyes, as if dust had been thrown in them.

"I suppose you're gatherin' 'dues,' Father Mat?" she inquired in an apologetic tone of voice.

"Well, yes," said Father Mat dubiously, giving a slight shrug of his shoulders. "Sed beati qui non expectant," he added in an undertone. The widow looked at him in bewilderment.

"I mean, Mrs. Whelan," continued Father Mat, "that Crow lane usually gets more than it gives."

"Musha, the craythurs, if they had it they'd give it with a good heart," said she. "There's myself didn't earn a penny this six weeks. People haven't the money to buy apples and oranges like they used."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Father Mat. "Why, I thought you were doing a brisk trade at the football match last Sunday."

"Ah, don't talk to me about last Sunday and the football match," was the indignant reply. "They told me the whole country would be there, and, like the fool I am, didn't I get the full of a basket on 'score' from Mrs. Cody below, God bless her, thinkin' I'd make my fortune, when instead of that 'twas only gettin' into debt and hardship I was. Who were there but a handful of gorsoons without a penny in their pockets, no more nor meself. And to crown the joke, didn't it come rainin' in the evenin', spilin' not only the fun, but every bit of candy and cakes I had in the basket. That's as true as I'm tellin' your reverence. I wouldn't tell a lie to the priest. So now Mrs. Cody is without her share, and I without me credit."

"Oh, don't be discouraged. Start again, Mrs. Whelan," Father Mat suggested good-humouredly. "Worse luck now the better another time. Are there not races in Kiltubber next week?"

"Yes," she made answer, her face brightening at this

remark of Father Mat. "Them will be something worth a body's while. But," she asked suggestively, "how am I to rise the price of a few oranges?" This was a plain hint for himself, and she threw a furtive glance at the priest to see how he was taking it.

Alas! at that very moment the sound of voices was heard in the back yard. The two dirty-faced urchins, growing weary of waiting outside in the cold, began to kick furiously at the door for admission. Oh, if the ground would only open and swallow them up! Poor Mrs. Whelan almost collapsed. Father Mat's kindly face grew dark and threatening. "Is it possible you have kept the children home from school this fine morning?" he demanded sternly. "No wonder you are the way you are, Mrs. Whelan, when you do not strive to rear your children properly."

"Ah, don't be too hard on me, your reverence. Sure the poor orphans haven't a stitch on their feet. When poor Bill was alive and plenty manes with us they never missed a day." At the remembrance of her departed comrade Mrs. Whelan filled up to cry.

But even tears could not move Father Mat. He was President of the School Attendance Committee, and he felt bound to show his displeasure.

"I won't listen to your excuses," he answered. "If you keep your children to school perhaps I may try to help you on in the world. By the way, do you go to Mass every Sunday yourself, Mrs. Whelan?"

"Oh, lawnees! Father Mat," she exclaimed in horror. "Bad as we are in Crow Lane, we don't miss Mass, at any rate."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said the priest as he moved towards the door.

"Don't go without leavin' us your blessin', Father Mat. Don't fall out with a poor widow that has no one to help her but the good God."

Father Mat strove to keep a severe countenance, but he failed. There was just the least twitch of his lips. Mrs. Whelan saw it, and knew well what it meant. So returning to the attack, she continued: "It's the first time I ever troubled a priest for anything. I'm not one to beg."

Down went poor Father Mat. After all, he was not a

school attendance officer. Not on knowledge alone do children live. Perhaps the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. God hears the widow's prayer. Why not he? An invisible hand seemed to stop him on the threshold.

Half reluctantly he returned to the kitchen, and, taking out a well-thumbed penny notebook, he scribbled a few lines in pencil.

"Here now, Mrs. Whelan," he said, "take this note down to Mrs. Cody, but don't breathe a word about it to the neighbours."

"God be good to all belongin' to you, livin' and dead," replied the delighted widow. "I'll have luck with the priest's money."

"Luck and grace," he added somewhat significantly; and replacing the book in his pocket, Father Mat went his way down the lane.

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No sooner had he disappeared than Mrs. Doran ran across the lane to the Widow Whelan's to know if any words had passed between herself and the priest, for she had overheard some remark about going to Mass every Sunday. To her surprise and disappointment she found Mrs. Whelan in unusually good humour as the result of Father Mat's visit. So immediately Mrs. Doran concluded that the priest must have given her some financial assistance.

Faithful to her promise, however, Mrs. Whelan was not taken off her guard. In spite of several leading questions, put in the most guileless fashion by her neighbour, she refused to make known the cause of her joy. To Mrs. Doran's mind such reticency was nothing short of want of confidence. What matter if she was one for news. But to be treated as a spy, and she only calling over through pure sympathy, thinking there had been a row. Although she did not care what the widow got or did not get, she would like to know for all that. Anything in the way of cunning or backsliding aggravated Mrs. Doran, and she could not rest easy until she exposed it.

"Why, then, he might have given you the price of a bushel of coal, for you want it worse than me," suggested Mrs. Doran, in all sincerity.

"And did he give you th' price of a bushel of coal?" the widow exclaimed in indignant surprise.

"Yes," coolly replied Mrs. Doran, "and don't I deserve it as well as another?"

"But you have a man to work for you," said Mrs. Whelan.

"Aye, indeed, ten shillings a week among eight of us. Aren't you better off now than when you had Bill working?" was the bitter retort.

"I don't deny God's goodness," assented Mrs. Whelan, "He always provides for the widow."

"And see how Father Mat wouldn't give you a few ha'pence," insinuated her neighbour; "he must have heard about you breakin' out again last week."

This vile aspersion riled the widow. Was she to lie under such base charges while she had documentary testimony of her good character in the priest's own handwriting? No, it would be altogether unnatural. She snatched Father Mat's note from her pocket; and brandishing it defiantly in the face of her malignant accuser, she cried out, in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard down the lane: "Look at that, Mrs. Doran; look at that! Where now is your bushel of coal?"

Mrs. Doran took the paper, and having, after some difficulty, deciphered its contents, she replied with a sardonic smile: "Much good may it do you, poor woman. But you might as well have told me so at the start."

The door closed with a mighty bang. Mrs. Doran had gained her point, and was quite pleased with herself. So likewise was Mrs. Whelan. For, as she explained to the orphans, it would be many a long day until that impudent fish-woman over the way came looking for news in her house.

Needless to relate, the incident was the talk of Crow lane for the remainder of that day. The general verdict of the neighbours with regard to Father Mat's generosity towards the Widow Whelan was "that you might as well be drunk as sober in the way of getting charity." To be sure, no one begrudged the widow her luck; but all had their misgivings about the result. Mrs. Doran, more outspoken than the rest, declared it her firm conviction that Mrs. Whelan would

probably take to drink worse than ever, and scandalise the lane with her bad tongue.

Kiltubber was six miles away. The races were fixed for the following Wednesday. An immense green-and-red poster, with a very realistic—but none too artistic—coloured print of a neck-to-neck finish in front of the grand-stand, had been pasted on a dead wall at the head of Crow lane. Every time Mrs. Whelan passed she stood before it rapt in admiration, her face beaming with delight at the prospect of a big day at Kiltubber. The coming event, in this instance, cast its sunshine before. In the widow's estimation the poster was particularly well done—equal, in fact, to anything she had ever seen with a circus. Indeed, if it didn't come to rain in the meantime, she was fully determined to cut out the picture and hang it in the kitchen as a souvenir.

In view of the early start on Wednesday morning, she remained up the night before, arranging the provisions on the ass's car, and, before the sun had wiped the mist from his eyes, she was on the road, perched like a queen on her throne of biscuit boxes, and a case of lemonade for her footstool—the very picture of happiness. Being well known among the country people, she had a "How do ye do?" for everyone she met along the road. Every now and then a lusty voice would cry out from behind the ditch, "God save you, Mrs. Whelan. I hope you'll have a good day." To which Mrs. Whelan invariably replied, "God send so. Don't forget callin' round to the stan'in' when you come." She was a business woman, and she was often heard to say that one penny piece is better for a poor body than a pocketful of good wishes.

Her first difficulty on reaching the racecourse was to gain admission for herself and her little ass and car. The man at the gate informed her that "dealers, huxters, trick-o'-the-loops," and such like, should pay two shillings to be allowed on the field. The idea of being put in the same category as trick-o'-the-loops!

"Is it charge for lettin' me in you would," protested Mrs. Whelan, "and I on the road since six o'clock this mornin'? Two shillings, indeed! Why, that's more than I'll make the run of the day."

"Stand back, now," said Constable Cooney, a tall, cylindrical-built member of the Kiltubber staff, who stood erect as a danger signal in front of the main entrance. The widow looked at him, but did not condescend to make a reply. If it was a sergeant "aself," but a common country constable! She simply ignored his interference, and continued the altercation with the man with the green badge on his coat. It was no use. The only means left was to arouse public opinion.

"Was there ever a poor woman treated after this fashion? Talk about landgrabbers and bailiffs! Oh, it's a true saying, there's no one as bad as your own if they had the chance. But ye didn't hear the last of this yet."

By this time Mrs. Whelan had quite a crowd about her. All agreed that she had been badly treated, but regretted that they had no authority to interfere with those in charge. They could do no more than protest; and, having done so, the impromptu meeting dispersed quietly, leaving Mrs. Whelan to fight her corner as best she could. Just then Kiely, the three-card man, rushed by, with his table under his arm, blissfully unconscious that he was literally "running his head against a stone wall." Before he knew the why or the wherefore, Constable Cooney, with surprising agility for a man of his avoirdupois, had caught the contemptible thimblerrigger in his grasp, and with the ease of a champion weight-thrower flung him back almost into the arms of Mrs. Whelan.

In ordinary circumstances, Mrs. Whelan would be above mixing with the likes of Kiely. But distress, like one touch of nature, makes the whole world akin. Helping her friend to his feet she took him into her confidence. Kiely, needless to say, from the nature of his avocation, was a man of good ingenuity and resource. It was not his first encounter, he assured the widow; many a time he had been warned off—nay, kicked off—the turf, and the next day he would be back as fresh as ever.

"You say you know the Colonel, Mrs. Whelan?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Mrs. Whelan, "knew him and he only a slip of a boy. I'm sure if I got a word with him he'd let us in, as he owns the racecourse."

"If that's all, it's quite easy. You'll promise to speak to him if I stop the carriage?" continued Kiely.

"To be sure," said the other.

"Then, listen here," he whispered. "You stand beyond at the turn. I'll be at the ass's head, by the way of giving him a wisp of hay. When you hear the Colonel's carriage coming shout, 'Big penny oranges, eightpence a dozen.' With that I'll give the ass a good lick on the nose, and before anyone can catch him the road will be blocked."

Mrs. Whelan promised to do her best. She took up her post at the cross-roads where she had a full view of all the approaches. Soon the rumbling of a carriage was heard in the distance. Constable Cooney became active, his trained ear detected at once the approach of a superior officer. The carriage swept round the angle of the road. It was a perilous moment for Mrs. Whelan. Would her accomplice play her false in the face of danger? With excitement she could scarcely cry out the watchword. Bravo!—there goes the ass. What a strategic movement to the rear! Constable Cooney is furious. The coachman is straining his reins to avoid a collision. All's well.

While the constable was struggling manfully to remove the recalcitrant donkey from the king's highway, the owner was holding her interview with the Colonel. The jolly old buck rather enjoyed the situation and laughed heartily as Mrs. Whelan stated her case.

"It's a bad wind blows nobody good, Mrs. Whelan," he remarked jokingly. "So come along, yourself and your friend, I shall get you through for this time."

Replacing the winkers on the ass, and securing her baskets, Mrs. Whelan took her seat and drove on triumphantly after the carriage. As she entered the gateway she could not resist the temptation of having a "fling" at poor Constable Cooney, who stood leaning against the pier quite exhausted after his labours.

"I got the better of you in the end, ould busybody," she hissed. Before the crestfallen constable could frame a retort, she had disappeared in the crowd.

The races left nothing to be desired, considered either from a sporting or a business point of view. According to some it was the biggest gathering and the best racing ever seen in

Kiltubber. No doubt, Mrs. Whelan had to give her undivided attention to the "stan'in'"; but she knew there must have been tight finishes from the way the boys were arguing about what won, when they came over for a snack during the intervals. The sun seemed to stand in the heavens that day. The heat was oppressive. Mrs. Whelan would say destructive; for considerable damage was done to a box of currant bread by the sudden and spontaneous explosion of some effervescent mineral waters. However, she was already insured against such trifling losses. Her baskets were all but empty, and her pockets full. Instead of growing hoarse with shouting, her voice only improved in strength and timbre as she sang out intermittingly to the passers-by, "This way, gentlemen! Big penny oranges, and cakes for the ladies!"

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Alas! never does time travel faster than at an Irish horse race. The last event over, the magic link snapped; and the thousands, who a moment before seemed welded in one dark mass, scattered in all directions, like marbles on a plate. Mrs. Whelan lost no time in collecting her little effects so as to get home before dark; for it was only when about to start she discovered to her dismay that she had forgotten to bring a lamp. Kiltubber barracks were on her way. It once passed, she had no fear. She could borrow a lantern when she got near town.

But, poor woman, she miscalculated the length of the journey, and the travelling rate of her jaded donkey. It was well after lighting-up time before she reached the police station. Trusting to luck she forged ahead. It had been a busy day with the police and, possibly, they would tumble into bed earlier than usual.

What an unwarranted hypothesis on the part of the foolish widow! She should have known Constable Cooney better than that. He was a man who knew no rest until he had his revenge. The remembrance of Mrs. Whelan's impudent jibe and "the humbuggin' sort of laugh" it evoked at his expense that morning as she entered the field still rankled in his martial breast. There was no bed for him that night as long as one hope remained of getting this insolent woman into

the hands of the law. He had been lying in wait for her two long hours.

The jingle of lemonade bottles heralded her approach. He looked out from his hiding place. Delightful!—just as he predicted—"No lamp on that vehicle burned." Come along, Mrs. Whelan.

Sudden as the lightning flash he turned his dark lantern upon the panic-stricken widow. "Stop that car!" he yelled; "where's your light?"

With fright the ass swerved across the road, causing a seismic shock among the piled up boxes and baskets. Mrs. Whelan struggled frantically to recover her equilibrium. It was too late. Uttering an unearthly shriek, she fell headlong into the ditch. Happily, she was none the worse, except that she found her temper at boiling point on regaining her feet.

A wordy and unholy war ensued between herself and the constable, the widow in her anger uttering a rash oath that she would have his life and gladly "swing" for him.

"It's your name and address I want, and not your life," said Cooney quite unmoved by her threats. "We shall meet again in the court of justice. Be gettin' home at once, or perhaps you may find yourself in Kiltubber Barracks."

It would be impossible to describe Mrs. Whelan's mental state during the remainder of her homeward journey. Small wonder, indeed, if she indulged in a little stimulant before rejoining her neighbours in Crow lane, where nothing but scorn and ridicule awaited her.

A week had elapsed since Father Mat's visit to Crow lane. Scarcely once during that time had he recalled his interview with Mrs. Whelan, or inquired about her success with the trading capital advanced by him on that occasion. It was only when he took up the local newspaper to see what won at Kiltubber that Mrs. Whelan and her apple-cart, by association of ideas, recurred to his mind. "I wonder how did she get on?" he thought, as he read of the record attendance and excellent sport. Turning over the paper, he was in the act of putting it aside, when unluckily he chanced to see a sensational heading to the Petty Sessions column. It ran thus: "Ructions in Crow lane!—The Result of the Races." His suspicions were aroused. He read on anxiously:—

"Constable Cooney summoned Mrs. Whelan, Crow lane, for non-compliance with the Lighting Act. Fined one shilling and costs."

"The Widow Whelan was also summoned by her neighbour, Mrs. Doran, for abusive and threatening language on the night of the Kiltubber Races. Mrs. Doran deposed that she was standing at her own door in Crow lane when Mrs. Whelan arrived back from the Races. She was noticeably 'under the influence,' and fearing she would drop off the car, she (the plaintiff), through good nature, went to help her down. But before she laid a hand on her Mrs. Whelan fell in a 'hape' on the street. Then she started abusing the plaintiff, and calling her 'infarior' names. Two of the neighbours had to hold her, for she had a switch in her hand ready to strike.

"Chairman—Did you give Mrs. Whelan any provocation?"

"Mrs. Doran—No, your Worship. I only said she ought to be ashamed of herself, drinkin' the priest's money, and bringin' disgrace on the lane.

"Chairman—Who is the clergyman to whom you made reference?"

"Mrs. Doran—Our own Father Mat, yer honour. He had given her the price of a few oranges only a day or two before the Races.

"Chairman—Have you anything to say for yourself, Mrs. Whelan?"

"Mrs. Whelan (excitedly)—Don't believe wan word out of her mouth. It's in jail herself and Constable Cooney ought to be for persecutin'—"

"Chairman—That will do, Mrs. Whelan. You will be imprisoned for one calendar month."

"So the last state of that widow is worse than the first!" muttered Father Mat; and, in disgust, he threw the paper into the waste-basket.

